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HALF HOURS WITH GOD

MEDITATIONS

ON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

BY

A PRIEST

OF

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS



J. H. D. Souza



CATHOLIC ORPHAN PRESS
CALCUTTA

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PREFACE

Justus ex fide vivit : the just man liveth by faith (Rom. i. 17).

It is by regulating our life according to the teaching and example of Our Divine Lord, that we shall be able to lead that supernatural life which ought to be the mark of every Christian and above all of those consecrated to God. It is therefore not less useful than it is necessary to bring home to our minds by frequent meditation those divine lessons and examples. They will be thus impressed deeply on our hearts and their practice will naturally follow. The neglect of this exercise blinds the soul's vision of the supernatural ; human and natural motives creep into our daily actions which in time may become, if not worthless, at least devoid of a great deal of supernatural merit. Nay more, we may so neglect the principles of the spiritual life as to expose ourselves to the gravest danger.

Meditation, moreover, greatly helps us to acquire that knowledge of self without which self-improvement is hardly possible. It excites in our hearts a true spirit of compunction, an inveterate hatred of sin, a greater esteem for those supernatural virtues which Our Lord desires so much to see in us. In this manner we are brought nearer and nearer to God, the source of all wisdom and holiness. Ought we not then set a high value on the means of obtaining such precious advantages as these, and be incited thereby to apply ourselves with greater earnestness to mental prayer ? It is true that "the Spirit breatheth where he will" (John iii. 8) ; still in God's ordinary providence the better we prepare our hearts for the reception of God's graces, the more abundantly shall we receive them. If we wish then to draw Our Lord's blessing on our meditations and thus make them fruitful, we must cultivate the necessary dispositions.

First, purity of conscience. "Blessed are the clean of heart : for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8) ; and on the other hand : "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. i. 4). The more then we cultivate purity of conscience the fitter shall we render ourselves to receive the inspirations of Divine Wisdom.

Secondly, true humility. Our Lord himself has said: "I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. xi. 25). It is not then worldly wisdom that will open our hearts to the treasures of heavenly wisdom, but genuine humility by which we approach God as little children eager to learn from Him and to be helped by Him.

Thirdly, generosity and readiness of heart to follow the inspirations of grace. We know from the parables of the Gospel how the Divine Husbandman expects an abundant harvest from the seed He has been sowing, and how the Lord expects high interest from the talents He has entrusted to His servants. Hence it is to such as show themselves generous in putting into practice the lessons Our Lord teaches them, that He grants more light and more abundant help.

With regard to the meditation itself we cannot do better than recall to mind the directions of St. Ignatius, that great master of the spiritual life. He directs us:—

First—to preface carefully the subject of our meditation the evening before, and to select definitely the fruit we wish to derive from it ;

Second—to recall to mind for a few moments before going to sleep the subject of our meditation, and to do likewise again on awakening in the morning ;

Third—to begin our meditation by standing a few moments before our priedieu, and placing ourselves in the presence of God's infinite Majesty and then to kneel down in humble adoration ;

Fourth—to dwell on each point of the subject matter, trying to derive some spiritual profit from the consideration of the persons, the words and the actions: not to indulge our mind in a barren speculation, but to endeavour to excite in our hearts affections, desires and resolutions in accordance with the subject of our considerations; now, of compunction, repentance, shame; now, of joy, gratitude, confidence and love.

Some practical resolution must be reached, not a general one but a particular one applied to our present circumstances and bearing on our daily actions ;

Fifth—to conclude each meditation with a fervent colloquy with Our Lord and His saints, offering Him in particular our good resolutions and imploring His help to put them into execution.

The subjects of these meditations have been chosen from the life and teachings of Our Lord as set forth in the Gospels. The chronological order followed is that adopted by Abbé Fouard in his beautiful *Life of Christ*. Each meditation has two or three points presenting some simple practical reflections and suggesting some affections and resolutions, although these, for the most part, are left to each one's own initiative.

The meditations may be followed in their order or can be taken up in accordance with the liturgical year, *viz.*, those on the birth and infancy of Our Lord during Advent and Christmas ; those on the passion during Lent, and those on the resurrection during Paschal time. The meditations on the public life of Jesus may be inserted between these different periods of the year. Some meditations on the principal feasts of Our Lord and on the chief saints of the ecclesiastical calendar are subjoined in an appendix together with a meditation for each monthly recollection to be made on the day we have assigned for our recollection.

May Our Lord and His holy Mother bless this humble effort to make them better known and loved !

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PART I

THE BIRTH, INFANCY AND HIDDEN LIFE OF OUR LORD

I. MARY, THE MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER

The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David : and the virgin's name was Mary (Luke i. 26-27).

Ask God that Mary's example may excite in you a great desire of becoming more and more pure and humble of heart.

1ST POINT.—Consider how God chooses a poor and unknown virgin to become the Mother of His Son. It was Mary's purity and humility that rendered her so dear to God. The better you imitate your heavenly Mother in the practice of these two virtues, the more you too will become an object of God's love and merit His special favours.

2ND POINT.—Consider Mary's sanctity in her little home of Nazareth : how simple she is, though so great in God's eyes ; how recollected and united to God in the performance of her humble duties. Reflect how you too can sanctify your smallest actions, if like Mary you perform them out of love for God and in union with Him. Remember that in this way you may give great glory to God and acquire great treasures in heaven. See whether you cannot sanctify some particular action to-day in imitation of Mary.

3RD POINT.—Consider what great things God achieved through this humble virgin. Although you may not be eminent in learning or other acquirements, yet in a similar manner you can become in the hands of God a powerful instrument for good. It is only by being truly humble and pure of heart that you can become such an instrument. This thought should excite in your heart an ardent desire of these virtues and a firm determination of employing generously the means of acquiring them.

II. THE ANNUNCIATION

And the angel being come in, said unto her : Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women... Behold thou shalt...bring forth a son : and thou shalt call his name Jesus... He shall be called the Son of the Most High... And Mary said : Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it done to me according to thy word (Luke i. 28-38).

Ask fervently that you may learn from the example of Mary to receive God's graces with humility and to be generous in corresponding with them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the humility with which Mary receives the wonderful dignity conferred upon her. Never was a creature so highly honoured ; she was raised above all men and angels ; she was brought into a wonderfully close relation with God Himself ; such an abundance of God's choicest gifts are therewith bestowed on her that the Archangel himself, though familiar with the beauty and holiness of the heavenly spirits, is filled with admiration while he contemplates the soul of this humble virgin. Nevertheless, no thought of self-complacency finds entrance into the heart of Mary. She recognises that all this greatness comes from God and that, in herself, she is nothing but the handmaid of the Lord. Reflect how becoming and how advantageous, if not necessary, it is for yourself to imitate your heavenly Mother in ascribing to God's liberality, never to your own merits, the gifts you have received from Him. Repent of your self-complacency and form good resolutions for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider the generosity with which Mary accepts the Motherhood of the Redeemer. High indeed was her vocation, but it carried with it a complete sacrifice of self. She knew from the Scriptures what the Redeemer would have to suffer ; yet she offers herself without reserve to share all the sufferings and humiliations of her Divine Son. Call to mind your own vocation. The priesthood is indeed a high calling, and it too demands the continual sacrifice of self to God. Are you willing to share the sufferings of your Divine Master ? Think on what a glorious reward it entails. Earnestly resolve to put in practice at once this generosity in God's service, to sacrifice always, and in particular to-day, your own wishes and repugnances, to do in all things the holy will of God.

III. THE VISITATION

Having been informed by the Angel that her cousin Elizabeth would bear a son, "*Mary rising up went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth.*" (Luke i. 39-40).

Pray fervently that you may be induced, by the example of your heavenly Mother, to be diligent in the practice of fraternal charity.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the first fruit of God's love in Mary is the love of her neighbour, impelling her with ardour to impart to others a share of the great blessings she herself has received. Reflect within yourself and say, If I love God, then I too ought to love those that are so dear to Him, I ought to desire to do them good, to make God better known to them and to increase His love in their hearts. Do I find this sign of divine love in me? When I see around me so many souls in need, so many ignoring God altogether or living in sin, does the love of God urge me to do all I can for their salvation and sanctification? Consider the means you have at your disposal to fulfil this duty and resolve to make use of them with diligence and generosity.

2ND POINT.—Recall to mind what self-denial Mary practises in fulfilling this office of love. Her own preferences are set aside. She was living in great happiness in Nazareth, where she could serve God in peace and solitude and in sweet intercourse with Him; but she does not hesitate to forego her own predilections in order to do what she deems to be more pleasing to God. The journey she is about to undertake will be long and fatiguing. But she heeds no difficulty when the glory of God and her neighbour's good is involved. In Elizabeth's house, she, the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven and earth, will have to perform the work of a poor servant. But this humble work becomes sweet and noble in her eyes because it is undertaken for God.

How many occasions do we not find in our lives, in which we must renounce our own inclinations and our comfort in the performance of some humble duties pertaining to the spiritual advantage of our neighbour. God's glory demands from us the sacrifice. Reflect on what treasures may accrue to us in heaven by seizing on such occasions. Make a practical application to your life and occupation.

IV. MARY IN THE HOUSE OF ZACHARY AND ELIZABETH

When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?..... And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. (Luke i. 41-46).

Ask fervently for the grace to appreciate God's favours and to render heartfelt thanks for them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the deep reverence accompanied with holy joy and exaltation that filled the heart of Elizabeth on receiving a visit from the Mother of God. What should be my feelings when my Divine Lord comes each morning to dwell in my poor sinful heart?

2ND POINT.—Consider how, as soon as Elizabeth utters her praises, Mary at once refers them to God by glorifying Him for His great gifts and by acknowledging her own nothingness. How pleasing it must be to God to see us act in this manner! And yet, in justice we are bound to do so. Let us not then attribute to ourselves the greatness we attain, through our holy vocation, nor suffer pride to enter into our hearts.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Mary, during the three months she dwelt in the home of Elizabeth, became for this pious family a source of edification as well as of blessing. Beautiful indeed is the example of her cheerful humility in undertaking the humblest duties for Elizabeth. Mary, the Queen of heaven and earth, did not deem them beneath her dignity. Consider likewise with what modesty, recollection of mind, and intimate union with God, each of her simplest actions was accompanied. Jesus was with her Whose presence sanctified the whole family. What grand lessons a priest should derive from this example! Jesus should abide always in his heart; he too should bring Jesus to all those with whom he dwells, or with whom he may have intercourse; he too should be able to draw souls to God by his humility, modesty, charity, and union with God.

V. THE MAGNIFICAT

Represent to yourself the Blessed Virgin giving utterance to her deep gratitude towards God in the words of the Magnificat.

Ask fervently that you may learn to set a high value on the great graces you have received from God, and to be truly grateful for them.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Mary returns thanks to God for the great dignity to which He has raised her :—“ My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.” Have I not still greater reason than Mary to acknowledge my lowliness and to thank God for all He has done for me? He made me His child in Baptism, and afterwards raised me to the highest dignity among men, to the dignity of the priesthood in many ways similar to Mary’s divine Motherhood. When I think how little deserving I am of such a favour, can I ever sufficiently thank God for it? Can I ever sufficiently admire and praise the Divine Mercy for having thus regarded the lowliness of His servant?

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary also thanks God for the great and wonderful graces He has bestowed on her : “ He that is mighty hath done great things to me.” Reflect on the many special graces attached to your vocation, on the numerous means of sanctification at your disposal, and on the close relations you have with God, and do you likewise pour out before God the gratitude of your heart.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Mary in her song of praise thanks God, because she has been so wonderfully chosen as the channel of His mercies to men :—“ His mercy is from generation unto generations.” Who can estimate the number and the value of the graces that have been vouchsafed to mankind through the divine Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin? Reflect how your holy vocation renders you likewise a channel of God’s abundant graces to men. Innumerable and wonderful are the benefits showered by God’s infinite mercy on mankind through the ministrations of a priest. How thankful I ought to be for having been thus chosen for so sublime and so heavenly a function! And how this gratitude ought to inspire me with a generous resolution of employing every means to become daily more worthy of my high vocation!

VI. MARY AND JOSEPH GO TO BETHLEHEM

In those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee...into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. (Luke ii. 1-5).

Ask fervently that you may learn from the example of Mary and Joseph to be truly obedient, and to accept trials as coming from the hand of God.

1ST POINT.—Consider Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. The order of the Emperor causes them serious inconvenience : they have to leave their work for several days ; they have to travel a considerable distance over rugged roads ; their poverty naturally deprives them of every comfort for the journey. Still they obey with simplicity and cheerfulness ; they do not examine what reason there may be for such an order, nor seek a pretext for excusing themselves on account of their own dignity ; neither do they reflect on the character of the Roman Emperor who orders them, nor do they murmur against the inconveniences to which the order will subject them. They see in the authority of the civil power God Himself, and in the command the expression of God's adorable will ; and hence they obey cheerfully, lovingly and promptly.

Reflect how pleasing to God is such obedience, and how just it is that He should exact from us obedience to our superiors. Try to penetrate yourself with the motives of obedience that actuated Mary and Joseph, and make good resolutions for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider Mary and Joseph in quest of lodgings in Bethlehem. They knew that Our Lord was to be born, and yet they could find no room for Him. Perhaps, on account of their poverty, they met with even rude rebukes. And finally they had to seek shelter in an abandoned stable. All this must have been for them disconcerting and hard to bear, still they do not lose their peace of heart or mind. They are aware that an infinitely wise and good God is watching over them. They do their best and all else they abandon entirely to God. His love for them is ever present to their minds and they know that, whatever trials He sends them, they are for His own

wise ends. Have I not the same motives for preserving my peace of soul? And yet, how easily I lose this peace when things do not happen according to my wish! Inspire yourself with the motives of confidence that guided Joseph and Mary.

VII. THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD

And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger (Luke ii. 6-7).

Ask fervently that you may learn to know Our Lord more intimately, to love Him more truly, and follow His example more generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord, coming into this world, was refused admittance by His own people. How their indifference, their coldness and ingratitude towards Him Whom they ought to have known and loved must have been a source of intense sorrow to Jesus! Reflect how you too, though having reason to know Him better than they, have often shut your heart against Him when He wished to come and dwell in it. How many even now find ample room in their hearts for all the things of this world, but none for Him Who is the fountain of all good! Bewail your own as well as their ingratitude and form a generous resolution to try and repair it in some degree. Lovingly invite Our Lord to come to you, offer Him your heart, poor and little as it is, that He may always dwell in it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin did all in their power to make the stable as comfortable as possible: how they tidied it as far as they were able; how they endeavoured to warm it; and how especially they tried to make up for its destitution and poverty by their love, their deep reverence and tender care for Jesus. When Our Lord comes to us, our hearts so cold, so devoid of virtue, must remind Him of the stable of Bethlehem. Let us then imitate St. Joseph and Mary by purifying as much as we can the poor dwelling we offer to Our Divine Master, warming it by acts of ardent love, making it as pleasing as possible to Him by our deep reverence, lively faith and absolute confidence. Let us invite Mary and St. Joseph to aid us in this office of love and gratitude.

VIII. THE DIVINE INFANT'S EXAMPLE.

HUMILITY.

Represent to yourself the stable of Bethlehem and the little Infant lying in the manger.

Ask fervently that you may learn to know Our Lord better, to love Him more truly, and to imitate Him more generously.

1ST POINT.—Imagine you are actually present in the stable of Bethlehem kneeling at the feet of your newly-born Saviour. Look at Him so small, so weak, so poor, so despised and ignored by men. Remember that this little helpless Babe is the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely worthy of all honour and glory. He wishes to appear as if He had not even the use of reason, as if deprived of all power and altogether helpless. So perfectly does He conceal His divine Majesty as to appear but a feeble infant in the eyes of men. How these considerations should cover me with shame ! I, who know so little, wish to appear wise and learned and to be esteemed as such ; I, so utterly weak, who of myself am nothing, wish my powers to be known and valued ; I, a poor sinner, seek after praise and repute. Let me lower my pride before this humble, little Infant, my Lord and my God, and ask Him to teach me that beautiful virtue of humility.

2ND POINT.—Consider the reasons why Our Lord chose to be born in such a lowly manner when He could have appeared in our midst in all the splendour of His wisdom, power and majesty. It is out of love for you, it is to draw your heart to Him ; it is that you might approach Him without fear and with full confidence. He has become little to make you great by raising you to the dignity of a child of God. He has become little to convince you of the necessity of being humble and to lead you to practise this virtue. For He knows all the dangers of pride and the terrible havoc it causes in the souls of men ; and, because He loves you, He ardently wishes to root out that vice from your heart and to make you truly humble so that He may enrich you with the abundance of His grace.

Excite then in your heart sentiments of love and confidence towards your newly-born Saviour. Make a firm resolution of applying yourself, with His assistance, to the acquisition of that virtue of humility of which He has set us so touching an example.

IX. THE DIVINE INFANT'S EXAMPLE

DETACHMENT

Represent to yourself the little Infant lying in the manger.

Ask fervently that you may learn to know Our Lord better, to love Him more and imitate His example more closely.

1ST POINT.—Consider the extreme poverty to which Our Lord has reduced Himself. He is in need of even the most necessary things, and this need is a source of suffering and humiliation to Him. Yet He gladly accepts it all; for He knows what evil is effected in the souls of men by greed for earthly goods; how for many it is the cause of most grievous sins, and for others a great obstacle to perfection. Therefore He, the Sovereign Master of all riches, utterly renounced them; He chose to be born in complete destitution in order to teach us to detach our hearts from them. Reflect on the danger to which a spirit of greed for the goods of this life, if not duly checked, might expose your soul. What a great obstacle to perfection it would become for a priest, and how destructive of all influence for good on the souls committed to his charge! Be convinced that no other way is safer and more secure than the way pointed out to us by Him Who is infinite in wisdom. Resolve, out of love for your Saviour, to withdraw your heart entirely from the goods of this world which He so completely renounced out of love for you.

2ND POINT.—Consider the little Infant trembling with cold and recall that it is for you He suffers. He could have surrounded Himself with every comfort. Unlike us, He had no need of suffering, nor did He deserve it. We, as sinners, and prone to indulge our sensuality, both need and deserve it. What a wonderful example Our Divine Master sets us! Nevertheless how reluctant we are to follow it! Perhaps, even now we eagerly seek for what satisfies the senses, and shrink, even at the call of duty, from everything unpleasant and burdensome. Prostrate at the feet of the suffering Babe of Bethlehem, firmly resolve to follow His example in the future. Ask Him to teach you to mortify your senses and to submit cheerfully to whatever is irksome and repugnant in the fulfilment of your daily duties.

X. THE SHEPHERDS GO TO BETHLEHEM

And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them and the brightness of God shone round about them : and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them : Fear not ; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For, this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.....The shepherds said one to another : Let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste : and they found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger (Luke ii. 8-16).

Fervently ask Our Lord to inspire you with an eager desire of knowing Him and of giving yourself entirely to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider those whom Our Lord first calls to Himself : not the wise and great ones of this world, but poor shepherds simple of heart, full of faith, and fostering in their soul a great desire of seeing the Saviour announced by the prophets. To such as these, not to the great and wise in their own conceit, does Our Lord love to manifest Himself. Happy are they who know Him and are admitted to converse intimately with Him ! What a source of wisdom, strength and consolation this heavenly intercourse is to a priest ! If you desire it ardently and generously strive by the practice of humility and simplicity of heart, God will assuredly grant it to you.

2ND POINT.—Consider how promptly and joyously the shepherds obey the call of God, and how richly they are rewarded in finding Our Lord. You too will receive a precious reward, if you readily follow the light granted you by God to lead you on the way of perfection and to draw you to Himself. United in spirit with the shepherds, prostrate yourself at the feet of the little Infant, adore Him with a lively faith, thank Him for His coming into the world, present Him with such little gifts as your poverty permits, for instance, your resolution of not refusing Him whatever sacrifices He may demand of you during the course of the day.

XI. THE SONG OF THE ANGELS

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying : Glory to God in the highest ; and on earth peace to men of good will. (Luke ii. 13-14).

Ask fervently that the little Infant may teach you how to glorify God, and how to obtain that peace which His coming brought to men of good will.

1ST POINT.—Consider how excellently the little Babe of Bethlehem glorifies His Heavenly Father by His humility, His poverty, His renouncement of all the pleasures of this world, and by the oblation of Himself as a victim of atonement for the sins of men. Reflect within yourself and say : I have been created to glorify God ; my true greatness rests in the fulfilment of this end ; in this way alone can I secure my eternal happiness. Therefore I should be earnest in the desire of giving to my Creator all the glory He expects from me. Jesus points out to me the way. The more closely I shall adhere to the example He has set me, the greater will be the glory I shall give to God. Let me examine in what duty to-day I may thus imitate Jesus in rendering glory to God.

2ND POINT.—Consider what class of men are rewarded by that gift of heavenly peace which the newly-born Saviour has brought into the world, that peace which nothing can disturb, in which alone is found true happiness and which is so necessary for all who want to serve God with fervour and alacrity. It is they who are willing to follow in His footsteps, who with Jesus and like Jesus desire to be little and to be unknown to the world, whose hearts are detached from the world's goods and pleasures, and disposed to do God's will in all things. Ask the little Infant to arouse within you an ardent desire for this heavenly peace and to make you strive generously to render yourself worthy of it.

XII. THE CALL OF THE MAGI

When Jesus was born.....in the days of king, Herod, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to adore him (Matt. ii. 1-2).

Ask fervently that you may learn from this meditation to esteem the greatness of your vocation, and that you may obtain the grace of following it generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great and singular grace it was for the Magi to have been called to visit Our Lord and to share in a special way His blessings. And yet, this first benefit bestowed on them was but the beginning of a long series of divine favours culminating in the eternal happiness of heaven. Think of your own call to the true faith and to the priesthood. How good God has been to you ! He has enlightened you by the bright star of His holy teachings and examples ; He Himself offers to show you the way. Say to yourself, who am I that Our Lord should have preferred me to so many ? Humble yourself before Him, thank Him from your inmost heart, ask Him to strengthen you so that you may never be unfaithful to so great a grace.

2ND POINT.—Consider how generously the Magi answered the call of God. They had to leave their homes and families ; they had to undertake a long and difficult journey. But nothing could make them alter their purpose. God Himself had called them. How could they in any way distrust Him ? He would be their Guide, Helper and Protector. Such should be my confidence in God. Following the example of the Magi I should be brave and generous under the guidance of my Divine Leader in the way of perfection. Form a firm resolution to shake off all pusillanimity and downheartedness in God's service.

3RD POINT.—Consider the great number of people who must have seen the star that led the Magi, and who either through want of courage to free themselves from worldly attachment, or through fear of the length and possible difficulties of the journey, were withheld from following it. What reason could they have had not to have placed their confidence in God ? What treasures of grace they lost by their lack of confidence ! Resolve not to imitate their example.

XIII. THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

Who having heard the king went their way ; and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them until it came and stood over where the child was (Matt. ii. 9).

Ask fervently that you may learn from the example of the Magi to have great confidence in God, and courage in overcoming all the difficulties you meet on the way of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Reflect on the difficulties the Magi encountered on their journey. Where their journey might end they did not know ; each day renewed their toilsome efforts. In the countries through which they travelled, they must have been exposed to attacks from robbers or from wild animals. This continual strain did not shake their courage ; nothing could withhold them from their purpose and make them retrace their steps. It was their confidence in God that made them set out on this journey ; it was the same confidence that now sustained them. God had called them. How could He now abandon them ? What a beautiful example for me ! If I wish to answer God's call and advance in the way of perfection, I am bound to meet with difficulties. I may have experienced some already. At times the journey will appear to me hard and tedious. It will mean for me a continual strain ; the enemies of my soul must be overcome. But if I go on courageously doing my best, faith and reason tell me that God's help and protection will not be lacking.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the star disappeared from their sight. This was the severest trial of all ; it looked as if God had abandoned them. Still they never lost their trust in God, and their trust in Him led them forward safely. They made inquiries and obtained exact information. They are rewarded by the reappearance of the star dispelling all doubt and anxiety, and are guided thus in perfect peace to the end of their journey. Apply this to yourself : when God, Who knows best what is good for you, tries you by aridity or desolation, act as the Magi ; never distrust God's loving providence. He ever watches over and protects you. Do not cease to do your utmost, and in due time the star will reappear. The trial will pass, and desolation will give place to spiritual joy and consolation. Thus you will attain in peace the end of your journey. Ask pardon for the past, if you have been deficient in confidence. Place yourself in God's loving hands and resolve with His help never to yield to discouragement.

XIV. THE MAGI AND THE CHILD

And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother. And falling down they adored him. And opening their treasures, they offered him gifts : gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matt. ii. 10-11).

Fervently ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of perfection and a steadfast purpose of applying yourself to its attainment.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a heavenly joy filled the hearts of the Magi when they had found Him Whom they had sought with such untiring perseverance. All the trials they had undergone were now amply recompensed. In like manner were the saints rewarded for their courageous efforts to advance in perfection and to draw nearer to Our Lord. Even in this life they attained a happiness such as the world knows not and cannot give. How great and how secure is the happiness they now enjoy for ever in the possession of God ! If I follow the example of perseverance set me by the Magi, I too can obtain with God's assistance this joy of the saints.

2ND POINT.—Consider with what deep faith and reverence the Magi prostrate themselves at the feet of the little Infant. They had probably expected to find a child born in a rich palace and they find the King of the Jews as a poor and apparently powerless Babe. Their faith however remains unshaken ; they recognise in Him their Lord and their God, and the sight of His humility and poverty serves but to increase their admiration, reverence, gratitude and love. With them prostrate yourself in mind before your Divine Saviour. With them admire the wonderful ways of God, Who came on earth to establish His kingdom in such a manner. Admire His love for you, remembering that it is for your sake He became so little and so poor. Let your heart overflow with gratitude and love in return for all He has done for you. Offer yourself to Him, and pray to Him for help to put into practice the holy lessons of humility, detachment and self-denial He gives you.

XV. THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

And opening their treasures, they offered him gifts : gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matt. ii. 11).

Ask Our Lord to inspire you with a strong resolution to be generous in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Magi offered to Our Lord the most precious things they possessed. Assuredly, it was but just for them to have done so, since they recognised Him as their Lord and God become man for them. I also recognise Him as such ; but do I give Him the best things I have ? Shall I be ungenerous towards Him Who has been so generous towards me ? Shall I offer to Him Who is infinite in majesty only what remains after I have first pleased myself ? How shameful it would be to act in such a manner ! If I have done so, how I should repent, and endeavour to repay my former want of generosity.

2ND POINT.—The gifts offered by the Magi implied a touching profession of faith. They gave Him gold, as a tribute to their King ; frankincense, as a homage to their God ; myrrh, as a recognition of their Saviour Who by His sufferings and death would redeem them. It is only reasonable that I too should profess by my actions the faith that is in me. I believe Our Lord to be King of heaven and earth ; I owe Him therefore the gold of my supreme love urging me to direct all my actions to His greater glory. I believe Him to be my God to Whom all praise is due in consideration of His infinite perfections ; that praise like pure incense should rise incessantly from my heart. I believe Him to be my Saviour Who for my sake endured unspeakable torments and died a most cruel death. I owe Him therefore the myrrh of selfdenial by which I should mortify and subdue my evil inclinations and for His sake lovingly embrace the cross. Do I thus act up to the faith I profess ? I know that these gifts are due to Jesus ; perhaps so far I have offered them with a sparing hand. What gifts can I offer Him to-day ?

XVI. THE OBLATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord (Luke ii. 22).

Ask in this meditation that you may learn to know better Jesus and Mary, to love them and to imitate them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the boundless love of Jesus for us. From the earliest period of His life on earth, He wishes to offer Himself as a victim to His Heavenly Father in order to atone for our sins, to open heaven for us, and to acquire for us those treasures of grace leading us to eternal life. Say to yourself: Our Lord has done this for me, although He knew what I am and how often I would be ungrateful to Him. How shameful it would be, if far from being ready to suffer for His love, I should seek only my own ease and comfort even at the expense of duty!

2ND POINT.—Consider the generosity of Mary. Jesus was her all, her sole treasure in this world. No mother ever loved her child with a purer and more ardent love than Mary loved Jesus. But when God demanded Him as a victim for the sins of mankind she at once submitted, knowing full well what this oblation meant. Shall I not try to show myself a true son of so generous a Mother by never refusing the little sacrifices God demands of me in the fulfilment of my daily duties?

3RD POINT.—Consider how great this offering of Jesus and Mary was in the sight of God; and yet, its wonderful greatness was known to nobody but to God and His angels. It is in this way the saints act, hiding their most heroic actions from the sight of men that all honour may be given to God alone. It is in the same way I too should act: fulfilling my daily duties in simplicity and cheerfulness so that no one may even suspect what they cost me; bearing courageously the humiliations God sends me without allowing others to perceive my wounded feelings; renouncing my own desires and preferences to please my brethren, without manifesting the inconvenience or pain I experience from the sacrifice. How many divine blessings I shall draw upon myself, and what great merits I shall gather for heaven, if I thus follow the example of Jesus and Mary. Let me examine in what I may imitate them to-day.

XVII. SIMEON RECEIVES OUR LORD IN HIS ARMS .

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon : and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he also took him into his arms and blessed God and said : Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace : Because my eyes have seen thy salvation (Luke ii. 25-30).

Ask fervently that Our Lord may move your heart with an ardent desire for His visits, and with feelings of gratitude when He vouchsafes them. •

1ST POINT.—Consider how for many years Simeon desired ardently to see if only for a moment the Redeemer of the world, and how he prepared himself for it by protracted penance and prayer. He made it the aim of his life to render himself worthy of this inestimable favour. And surely when we reflect on who Our Lord is, Simeon's ardent wish of seeing Him before his death was a worthy object of his many years of prayer and penance. How ardent ought to be my desire, how fervent my preparation to receive daily the same Lord, not in my arms only, but in my heart. This Divine Guest eminently deserves that my whole life should be a continual preparation for His reception. Never will my heart be so pure, so adorned with virtues as to be a worthy abode of Him Who is infinite in holiness. To purify and sanctify it more and more should be for me a daily task of love for the reception of such a Guest.

2ND POINT.—Think of the holy joy and gratitude with which Simeon was filled on receiving the Divine Child into his arms in Whom he recognised with deep faith his God and Saviour. How lovingly he pressed Him to his heart, how fervently he thanked God for the favour granted to Him ! Our Lord comes to me not only once but every day, not merely for a few moments but to make my heart His dwelling. With His hands full of blessings He comes and unites Himself to me to make me pure with His purity, strong with His strength, holy with His holiness, and rich with His own heavenly riches. How can I ever sufficiently esteem such a favour ! Ought not my heart to be overflowing with joy and

aglow with love and gratitude? What else can be my desire but to possess Him and to be possessed by Him? Should not all the things of the world become as despicable in my eyes as they became in the eyes of Simeon? Reflect on your preparation both proximate and remote for holy Communion, and on your thanksgiving after it. See where you fail and resolve to amend.

XVIII. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country. And after they were departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him (Matt. ii. 12-13).

Ask fervently that you may learn to submit respectfully and lovingly to the dispositions of Divine Providence.

1ST POINT.—Consider how God gives free scope for a time to the wicked designs of Herod, and how in the meantime He ceases not to watch over and provide for those dear to Him. If I had always kept this in mind in whatever difficulties I may have met, would I not always have preserved my heart in peace? For can I not say: "God loves me; I am in His care: He guides me by His infinite wisdom, and by His infinite power He will bring all to a favourable issue." If I trust Him and do what in me lies, assuredly He will never fail me in any trial.

2ND POINT.—Think of the painful sacrifices this order to flee into Egypt brought on the holy family. It came quite unexpectedly in the middle of the night. They were unprepared for so long and difficult a journey; all that belonged to them had to be abandoned, and they had to start at once for an unknown country. And how would they procure the means of livelihood there? Nevertheless, no murmur escaped them. They might have said, Why should the Son of God have to flee before an earthly king? Has not God a thousand means of protecting us otherwise? Why were we not warned in advance? But no such thoughts as these were entertained by them; they had too deep a reverence for the unsearchable counsels of God; His infinite wisdom and power was ever present to their minds and so they abandoned

themselves with confidence into His hands. It is wise and at the same time but just that we should submit ourselves completely and confidently to the guidance of Divine Providence. What a source of peace and security it is for those who practise it ! Resolve to put yourself entirely in God's hands doing what you can and abandoning the rest to His loving care.

XIX. THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT

Arise and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt ; and be there until I shall tell thee (Matt. ii. 13).

Ask fervently that you may learn to bear bravely all difficulties and sufferings for the love of God.

1ST POINT.—Consider how much Mary and Joseph must have had to suffer on this long journey from Bethlehem to Egypt ; and the more so as being altogether unprepared they were unable owing to their poverty to procure for themselves any comfort. But they knew that it was for Jesus' sake they were suffering, and this thought enabled them to bear cheerfully the hardships they had to undergo. Reflect on how you are wont to bear the little crosses you occasionally meet on your way to heaven. Happy are you if you sanctify them by accepting them from God's hands for the sake of Jesus ; for thus you practise many virtues, acquire new merits for heaven, and atone for your sins. If hitherto you have failed to sanctify your trials and difficulties make a good resolution for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider for what a long time the holy family had to remain in exile and in poverty. But Our Lord was with them. They knew how He loved them, and this love compensated abundantly for all they had to suffer. If I remembered always how Our Lord is with me, how He loves me more for everything I do for Him :—for every little hardship I endure for His sake, for every sacrifice I make for Him, for every little victory I gain over my evil inclinations—what a consoling thought this would be for me ! Why should I then be distressed or discouraged in aridity of mind or in time of temptation ? Our Lord to Whom I belong is with me, He loves me and He knows that it is for Him I suffer. Make acts of faith, of confidence and of love, offering yourself to remain in exile with Him and to suffer for Him. Call to mind that to be loved more and more by Him is better than anything the world can give you.

XX.—THE HOME OF NAZARETH

When Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt saying : Arise, and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel... Who arose and took the child and his mother and came into the land of Israel.....And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth. (Matt. ii. 19-23).

Ask Our Lord that you may learn from Him to keep your heart free from all worldly ambition and from all hankering after the esteem of men.

1ST POINT.—Consider the members of the holy family. How really great they were ! And yet they are satisfied to live unknown and despised by the world. Reflect on the dignity of Joseph, a man of royal blood, whom God Himself has so highly honoured as to confide to his care and place under his authority Jesus and Mary. He lives at Nazareth as a humble village carpenter, nor does he wish for any higher employment. He does not repine at his reduced circumstances. He does not desire that men should know anything of the high dignity conferred on him by God. His only desire is to be unknown to the world that God alone may have all the glory of the favours bestowed on him. Consider his spouse, Mary—the Queen of heaven and earth, invested by God with a dignity never given to any other creature, adorned with the most glorious gifts both natural and supernatural; and yet, she is willing to pass her whole life as the spouse of a poor workman, to be engaged in the humblest household duties whereas she might have accomplished the greatest things. She too desires nothing but to be little and unknown with Jesus and for His sake. Reflect now on their charge, Jesus infinite in majesty, Who could bring the whole world prostrate to His feet, Who by His wisdom and power could win the admiration of all men. And nevertheless see the life He has chosen for Himself. What an example for me ! I am nothing, and perhaps I wish to appear great. If I were known as I am, so weak, so ignorant, so full of defects, how ashamed of myself I would be ! and still I wish to be honoured, I hanker after the worthless esteem of men, and perhaps even murmur against my superiors who not recognising my merits give me no higher, and perhaps only an insignificant employment. Again I may and must recognise the great graces God has given me ; but perhaps I recognise them only to pride myself on them, instead of ascribing them to God's mercy and of using them for His greater glory.

2ND POINT.—Consider that it is for your sake Jesus has chosen for Himself, His Mother and St. Joseph, this lowly and hidden life ; He wishes to teach you where true greatness lies and how little you should value the esteem and honours of the world ; He wishes to root out of your heart all vainglorious ambition so as to make it a fit receptacle for the abundant favours of heaven. Think how we deceive ourselves when we do not follow this beautiful example set us by Him Who is Infinite Wisdom. Pray that you may understand God's ways, and resolve to combat your pride in some particular manner.

XXI.—OUR LORD AT NAZARETH

Imagine you are beholding Our Lord in the house of Nazareth, helping His holy Mother and working with St. Joseph.

Ask Our Lord that you may learn from His example to sanctify your daily work.

1ST POINT.—Consider the kind of work Our Lord has chosen for Himself. It is most lowly work, although He is the Almighty God governing with infinite wisdom His whole creation. It is hard work, continued without respite from morning till night, although He could have had angels to serve Him. It is always the same work, although there is no work however great that He could not perform. What a lesson for me, if I fancy lowly work below my dignity or indulge in laziness or complain about my abilities being buried and unrecognised !

2ND POINT.—Think how this lowly work was wonderfully great in God's sight. How His Heavenly Father looked down with love on that work by which He was so perfectly glorified. For it is not such work as is greatest in the eyes of men that is greatest in the eyes of God, but that which is done with the greatest love for Him. Say to yourself, whatever work God gives me it is that which most pleases Him ; although to men it may appear lowly, if I perform it in the same spirit as Our Lord, it is really great in God's sight.

3RD POINT.—Consider the manner in which Our Lord, performs His work,—carefully, for however lowly it is the work of His Heavenly Father,—diligently and cheerfully,

because it is a work of love. If I were animated with the same feelings, how could I ever perform any work in a lazy or negligent fashion? I too work under God's eyes, I work for Him Who is infinite in majesty, I too can make my work an expression of love and gratitude to God to whom I owe so much. Ought I not then have reason to be joyful when my work is hard because then especially I have an occasion to prove to Our Lord that I love Him?

Think how Jesus while engaged in work kept Himself united in heart and mind with His Heavenly Father, and thus sanctified His smallest actions. What a great lesson He teaches me here! If during the day I often recall God's presence, often raise my heart to Him, what an efficacious means I shall have of sanctifying my daily work however humble, and of turning it into a source of blessings.

XXII. JESUS REMAINS IN THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM

And when he was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the (Paschal) feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. And his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey and sought him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.....And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? (Luke ii. 42-49).

Fervently ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him, to love Him and to imitate Him.

- 1st POINT.—Consider Jesus accompanying His parents to the temple. The journey must have been hard and fatiguing, especially for Jesus; but the ardour of their love inspired them with alacrity, for they had an opportunity of offering to God in a special manner their homage and adoration. In

this way they gave expression to their love and gratitude. Mary and Joseph never let a year go by without performing that act of piety, and on this occasion Jesus is old enough to accompany them. When I reflect on the greatness and goodness of God and on the benefits I have received from Him, I ought to feel how meet it is that I should perform my spiritual exercises with fidelity, diligence and joy, not regarding them as a burden, but as a precious opportunity of offering to God a token of my love and gratitude.

2ND POINT.—Represent to yourself Jesus, Mary and Joseph praying in the temple. What deep reverence, humility, confidence and fervour accompany their prayer! Reflect on the reasons you have for humbling yourself before God's Infinite Majesty and for exercising confidence in His Infinite Goodness. Try to engender in your soul deep feelings of awe and reverence towards your Lord and Creator and thus imitate the prayer of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord loved His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph with a greater and purer love than ever child loved its parents. He knew how much pain and anxiety His action would cause them and yet He remained behind in Jerusalem without their knowledge. He had to teach a great lesson to such as would be called to do His work upon earth, namely, that even love for father and mother however strong and holy should never withhold them from, nor hamper them in the work God calls them to accomplish. Reflect how God demands of you a similar detachment. His words are :—"he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Innumerable are those who have adhered to this holy precept, it behoves me also to practise it. No love must intervene between me and God not even the love of my parents, much less any other attachment. Pray that God may strengthen this disposition in your heart.

XXIII. MARY AND JOSEPH FIND JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

The gospel narrative is the same as in the preceding meditation.

Fervently ask Our Lord to make you realise better what a great boon it is to possess Him, and to move your heart with an ardent desire of becoming more and more united with Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the intense sorrow of Our Lady and St. Joseph when they became aware of the absence of Jésus. He was their only treasure, a treasure they esteemed far more than anything this world could offer them ; and therefore when they had lost Him, though by no fault of theirs, they grieved bitterly. Learn from their example what a terrible thing it is to lose Jesus, and firmly resolve to suffer anything even death itself rather than expose yourself to such a loss.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary and Joseph allowed themselves no rest until they had found Jesus again. They could not live without Him ; with Him, life was heaven on earth. Although night had set in, although they had to return alone to Jerusalem, neither the darkness nor the dangers of the road, nor the fatigue of a whole day's march could keep them back. How fervently they prayed ! How diligently they made search ! And when they had again found Him, what heavenly joy filled their hearts ! In their happiness of possessing their treasure again they forgot all the trouble and anxiety they had undergone.

Perhaps my negligence, my want of generosity has withheld me from that intimate union with Jesus which makes saints. If I understood better what this union means, I would find no rest till I had obtained it ; I would face all difficulties in order to secure it ; neither the darkness of spiritual aridity nor the hardships of the struggle in conquering myself would be able to keep me back. And then on reaching the goal what a reward of happiness would be mine ! How light would appear all the efforts I had made to reach such happiness ! Pray for a better understanding of this intimate union with Jesus and for an ardent and efficacious desire of acquiring it. Resolve to be generous in using all the means at your disposal.

XXIV. JESUS RETURNS TO NAZARETH WITH JOSEPH AND MARY

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and, grace with God and men. (Luke ii. 51-2).

Fervently ask Our Lord to teach you to know and love Him, and to instil into your heart a strong purpose of imitating him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how those many years, which Our Lord spent in Nazareth are recorded for us in the simple expression, “He was subject to them”. The Creator subject to His own creatures! He Who is infinite in wisdom, dignity and holiness condescended to submit Himself in perfect obedience in order to teach us by His example what glory God derives from the complete subjection of our will. Nay more. He points out this way to us because it is the shortest way to heaven, a perpetual safeguard against the dangers we must encounter, a means of acquiring the richest treasures of grace as it entails the practice of every virtue. Selfwill and the spirit of independence, on the contrary, lead straight to the loss of every spiritual good. Accordingly the beautiful example set by Our Lord during this long period of His life should urge me on to the practice of the virtue of obedience. How unwise I should be, were I not to profit by His teaching!

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary kept in her heart all those lessons of her Divine Son. They were for her so many germs of sanctity. If I follow her example and keep those divine teachings of my Saviour deeply engraved in my heart, I shall advance with speed in the path of perfection. Hitherto perhaps I have cared little for the practice of true humility, perfect obedience and complete detachment from the things of this world, though Jesus has often imparted to me these lessons. Try to imitate Mary’s example to-day.

3RD POINT.—Consider these words of Holy Scripture :—“And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men”. As He advanced in age, the divine wisdom and grace that were in Him shone forth with gradual increase before God and men. As I advance in age, I should likewise advance in wisdom, that is, I should increase in purity, humility and obedience; become more detached from the world, more united to God, and more desirous of heavenly things. Are not men ashamed who, having attended school for a long time, find that they have made no progress? Have I not reason to humble myself before God when I reflect on the long time I have been in the school of Our Lord and on the little progress I have made in perfection?

XXV. THE DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH

The Holy Scripture tells us nothing of the death of St. Joseph but it is generally believed to have occurred a short time before the beginning of Our Lord's public life.

Represent to yourself the holy patriarch dying in peace and happiness in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Ask in this meditation for the grace to be strengthened in your resolve to live entirely for Jesus so that one day you may die the death of the saints in peace and happiness

1ST POINT.—The life of St. Joseph had been a life of toil and privations. He had been little in the eyes of men and had no part in the pleasures of the world. But this was for him now a source of heavenly joy. Labour and hardships were over, and their remembrance was full of happiness because they had been borne for Jesus and the eternal reward was at hand. In fulfilling the duties of my vocation, I too may have to undergo hardships and trials; men may have little regard for me; I shall have to renounce many pleasures. If however I accept all this for the sake of Jesus, the sacrifice will become for me also a source of heavenly joy. The troubles of this life are soon over, and the glorious reward will last for ever.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the life of St. Joseph was distinguished by his complete detachment from the things of this world. It now costs him nothing to be separated from them. This was another source of peace for him at his death. The work God had given him to do he had accomplished with the utmost fidelity. It had brought him neither riches nor honours, but in God's eyes it was of inestimable value because it had been done with such great perfection and love. God's glory he had always in view; never his own. His heart was therefore filled with heavenly peace and consolation. How different is the death of those attached to the pleasures of this life! They find it bitter because it separates them from all. How different is the death of those who have spent their lives in the neglect of the things of God and in quest of money and worldly renown. When the hour of death strikes, they discover their toil to have been vain. How different is the death of those who have been careless in the service of God and have abused of His gifts! Fear seizes them when they think of the account they will soon have to render to the Sovereign Judge. What death do I prefer? If I wish my death to resemble St. Joseph's, I must live like St. Joseph.

PART II

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS

XXVI. JESUS BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS MOTHER

Imagine you are beholding the final farewell of Jesus to Mary.

Fervently ask Our Lord to inspire you with a generous spirit of sacrifice.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great happiness of Jesus and His holy Mother in their abode in Nazareth. The source of Mary's happiness was the presence of Jesus ; besides Him, she cared for nought else. Her love for Him, pure, humble and generous, met with an ardent response in the Heart of Jesus. Heart-breaking indeed was then their separation ; increased no doubt by the thought present to Mary's mind that Jesus left her to suffer and die a cruel death. Jesus was also aware of the sword of sorrow that would rend His Mother's heart. Nevertheless, without the least hesitation they made the sacrifice of their earthly happiness. So sacred was the holy will of God in their eyes that they did not deem their own human interests and feelings worthy of consideration ; no sacrifice was too great which tended to its accomplishment.

Contrast this painful separation with the little sacrifices God demands of you, for instance, some little pleasure, ease or comfort, or some personal satisfaction. Remember that Jesus and Mary underwent this sacrifice for your sake. What are you doing in return ? Do you not often refuse to offer them the little sacrifices their love demands of you ? In humility promise them generosity for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider the manner in which Jesus and Mary made this sacrifice. How Mary must have listened with a throbbing heart when Jesus announced to her that His time had come ! She knew what this meant for Him, but she uttered not a word to retain Him, nor did such a thought

or wish enter her heart. She consented fully and generously to the sacrifice demanded of her. There was nothing, however much it might cost her, she was unwilling to give up for the greater glory of God. And when Jesus saw the silent tears falling from the eyes of the Mother He loved so well, giving token of the deep sorrow that was breaking her heart, how His loving Heart too must have been rent with anguish ! Yet nothing could withhold Him from fulfilling the good pleasure of His Heavenly Father.

Reflect that the sacrifices you make for God and the manner in which you make them are the measure of your love for Him. Perhaps so far they have been few and far from generous. Humble yourself, and pray Our Lord to instil into your heart something of His own love for His Heavenly Father.

XXVII. JESUS GOES TO ST. JOHN

John was in the desert, baptizing and preaching the baptism of penance, unto remission of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem and were baptized by him...confessing their sins...In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan (Mark i. 4, 5, 9).

Ask fervently for a more intimate knowledge of Jesus so that you may love Him better and imitate Him more faithfully.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus comes to St. John to be baptised in the midst of sinners, as if He were one of them. Jesus could commit no sin, and to appear as a sinner was for Him the deepest of all humiliations. It was for our sake He underwent this humiliation : for us who, though real sinners, refuse to be humble and even rebel against the slightest humiliation. Examine how you take corrections and what your feelings are when others blame you or speak of your faults. How unwilling we are to tread in the footsteps of Him Who, being sinless, chose by His own free will to be ranked with sinners ; whereas we, true sinners, are unwilling to be accounted for what we are, and repine at the imputation of the slightest fault.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. John ardently desired to see Our Lord, and how this desire sustained him in his penitential life in this desert. From his youth he had been preparing himself for his work by prayer and penance in the solitude of a desert ; and now he was spending himself in the endeavour to draw souls away from sin and bring them back to God. I too can cherish the hope, founded on God's infallible promises, of one day seeing Our Lord, not only in His humanity but in His divinity as well. Then indeed I shall not only see Him but possess Him and abide in the joy of His holy presence for ever. The thought of this heavenly happiness, if ever present to my mind, will be for me a source of consolation in time of sorrow, and a fountain of strength in all the trials and difficulties that may arise in the fulfilment of my duties. Am I willing to spend myself and be spent to secure this joy of seeing Christ ?

XXVIII. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him. But John stayed him, saying : I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me ? And Jesus answering, said to him : Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then he suffered him. And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water : and lo, the heavens were opened to him : and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him. And behold a voice from heaven, saying : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. iii. 13-17).

Fervently ask that you may learn better to know, love and imitate Our Lord.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a sense of astonishment and of his own unworthiness St. John experienced when he saw Jesus coming to him to receive baptism at his hands. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost St. John knew Jesus to be his Sovereign Lord, the God of all holiness. Great therefore was his admiration, when he saw Jesus humbling Himself as if He were a common sinner. St. John's high calling did not prevent him from being deeply conscious of his unworthiness in presence of Him Who is sanctity itself.

How much more reason we have to admire the wonderful humility of Our Lord, when we see Him coming to us, His poor sinful creatures, concealed under the appearances of a little bread, to become the food of our souls. We too should experience a sense of our unworthiness when receiving Him. St. John would never have dared to baptize Our Lord, had He not expressed His wish. Nor would we dare to receive Him in our hearts, were we not aware of His ardent desire to come to us even daily. Admire the Infinite Goodness of God in His condescension towards you. Humble yourself before Him, and make acts of gratitude, love and confidence.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the very moment Our Lord performs this act of deep humility, His Heavenly Father exalts and glorifies Him and manifests His love towards Him. Humility endears us to God; it draws down His blessings upon us. If then you are truly humble, God will acknowledge you as His child, and will make you truly great in heaven. Should you not therefore endeavour by every means to acquire so precious a virtue? See in what occasion you may exercise this virtue to-day. 76 3 28

XXIX. JESUS RETIRES INTO THE DESERT

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for the space of forty days, and was tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days (Luke iv. 1-2).

Fervently ask Our Lord that He may teach you how to strengthen your soul against temptation.

1ST POINT.—Consider the devil approaching Our Lord to tempt Him. He did not know Who Jesus was; but he had witnessed His holy life at Nazareth. He saw Him now preparing to announce to men the kingdom of heaven, and he determined to do his utmost to bring about His fall. The devil is our most inveterate enemy; through hatred of God, he is bent on ruining our souls by drawing us into sin. To imagine that I can escape his assaults is madness; nay, the hatred and envy of this cruel foe increase, if he sees me advancing in merit and zeal for God's glory. Nevertheless

this fear of his assaults, far from deterring or discouraging me, should only make me ever more prudent and watchful, and incite me to draw nearer to God Who will never fail to protect me.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord prepares Himself to resist temptation by prayer and fasting. He desired to impress upon us the necessity we have of prayer and mortification, unnecessary as these were for Him. If by a true spirit of prayer I keep united to God, all the attacks of Satan, however crafty and astute they be, will be powerless against me. How this thought should impel me to apply myself to fervent prayer, as also to great confidence in God's protection! Reflect however on the lesson conveyed by the example of Our Lord: He not only prays but also fasts in order to teach us fully what we are in need of to overcome temptation. If all our passions were subdued, the devil would hardly find an occasion of tempting us. We should therefore endeavour to bring under control our passions, our sensuality and our pride. Examine whether you have taken this divine lesson to heart. Do you refuse, at least now and then, to gratify your senses not only in unlawful satisfactions but even in those in which you might indulge without sin? Do you mortify your pride by accepting cheerfully at least those humiliations which you cannot avoid? If not, you omit what you are in need of to surmount temptation.

XXX. JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO RESIST TEMPTATIONS

Afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said to him: All

these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus said to him: Begone, Satan! For it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left him. And behold angels came and ministered to him (Matt. iv. 2-11).

Fervently ask Our Lord to teach you how to resist temptations.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord conducts Himself in temptation. He is perfectly at peace, whether the devil takes Him to the pinnacle of the temple or to a high mountain; for Jesus knows that the devil is powerless against Him. If I seek God's protection and with His assistance resolve never to yield, the devil will also be powerless against me. Trusting in God and finding my refuge and protection in Him, I shall never have any reason of trouble or anxiety during temptation. Again, Jesus promptly rejects the suggestions of the tempter, thus showing us how we must deal with this enemy. To be slow or careless in resisting temptation is to expose ourselves to the gravest danger. Further Jesus opposes to the temptation the word of God. In this, He teaches us to keep alive in our hearts the teachings of our faith which are a powerful means of defence against the wiles of Satan. Our hearts should therefore be deeply penetrated with the truths of religion so that in time of temptation we may have them present to our minds. How attentive we should then be to the practice of daily meditation!

2ND POINT.—Consider the words:—"Then the devil left him, and behold angels came and ministered to him". St. Luke adds the significant phrase:—"for a time"—for Satan had not given up in defeat but had resolved to return. In like manner does he deal with us; if he departs from us for a time, it is no sign that he has given up his determination of alluring us into his snares. Hence we can never afford to be off our guard but must watch ceaselessly. Notice how, after this temptation, His Heavenly Father manifests His special love for Our Lord. A lesson is here taught us: that if we bravely resist temptations, not only can they do us no harm but they will draw us nearer to God, make us more worthy of His love, and win for us great rewards. Resolve to take advantage of these holy lessons.

XXXI. ST. JOHN BEARS WITNESS TO JESUS

John saw Jesus coming to him and he saith: Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who taketh away the sin of the world...I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven; and he remained upon him...and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God (John i. 29, 32, 34).

Fervently ask Our Lord to make Himself better known to you, and to enkindle in your heart an ardent desire of increasing in His love.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of St. John:—"Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." How truly these words are verified in Our Lord; for, by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, the Hebrews were saved from the sword of the avenging angel, and we, by the blood of the Redeemer were saved from the slavery of the devil and from hell. Jesus was the Lamb sacrificed for our redemption. What would have become of us, if Our Lord had not sacrificed Himself for our sake? What a debt of gratitude we owe Him for having saved us from so terrible a fate, and at such a price! Jesus is the Lamb of God meek and gentle, and worthy of all our love; at the same time He is our all-powerful aid and protection.

2ND POINT.—Consider the action of St. John. He knew that by giving testimony to Christ many of his disciples would henceforth abandon him and follow Jesus. But this did not restrain him, for he sought not his own honour, nor his own satisfaction; his own interests were of no account, provided Jesus were glorified. What a beautiful example and how deserving of our imitation! For after all, what are we, and what are our interests, that we should not willingly sacrifice ourselves and all we have for the sake of Jesus, our great God? We have reason indeed to be ashamed of ourselves for displaying so little generosity in glorifying Him on occasions when His glory demands some small sacrifice of our honour, our ease or our affections. Alas! so often do we displease Him rather than renounce some trifling satisfaction of our self-love. Let us repent sincerely for our past want of humility and generosity and take good resolutions for the future, in particular for to-day.

XXXII. TWO DISCIPLES OF ST. JOHN FOLLOW JESUS

The next day again John stood and two of his disciples. And beholding Jesus walking he saith : Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciplines heard him speak : and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turning and seeing them following him, saith to them : What seek you ? Who said to him : Rabbi...where dwellest thou ? He saith to them : Come and see. They came and saw where he abode ; and they stayed with him that day... And Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard of John and followed him. He findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him : We have found the Messias... And he brought him to Jesus (John i. 35-42).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of knowing Him better in order that you may make Him known to others.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the two disciples of St. John, after hearing the words of their teacher, followed Our Lord and sought to make His acquaintance. Jesus had attracted them, and from this moment onwards they became the recipients of increasing favours till at length He constituted them His sainted ministers. The saints testify to the wonderful favours bestowed by Our Lord on those who give themselves entirely to Him ; they dwell on the peace and happiness of His service, on the wisdom He deigns to communicate to them : but these testimonies will avail us little, if we do not imitate those two disciples of St. John in following Jesus and trying to acquire a personal knowledge of Him. In return for such an effort, the Divine Master will not fail to manifest to us His infinite perfections which will become bonds of love uniting us with Him and through this union we shall rapidly advance in holiness. Are these favours not worthy of our best endeavours to seek to know Jesus more by frequent converse with Him in prayer ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Andrew, after a few hours' intercourse with Jesus, his heart being full of love for the Divine Master, at once sought to make Him known and loved by others. This zeal was the outcome of his love—a zeal which ever afterwards fired the Apostle's soul. With us, too, it is the knowledge and love of Our Lord, enkindled within us by continual intercourse with Him, that will inflame our hearts with a true zeal for souls. In no other way can

we become fit instruments in the hands of God for procuring His glory. Am I convinced of this, and do I act in accordance with my conviction? Am I resolved to grow in the knowledge and love of Our Lord in order that I may work zealously and profitably for the salvation and sanctification of others?

XXXIII. JESUS BEGINS HIS TEACHING

And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit, into Galilee : and the fame of him went out through the whole country. And he taught in their synagogues and was magnified by all (Luke iv. 14-15).

Ask in this meditation that you may profit by the teachings of Our Lord.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great grace it was for the people of Galilee to have such a Teacher, so wise and holy, whose word was truth itself, and who both by precept and example pointed out to them the way to eternal happiness. Happy are they who profited by this divine favour, but what a source of regret for those who disregarded it ! Remember that you too have Jesus as your Teacher. It depends on you to have His holy lessons and example always before your eyes. What a cause of sorrow it will be for you hereafter if you neglect to take advantage of such a privilege, and what a source of happiness if you make good use of it !

2ND POINT.—Consider how all the people were full of praise and admiration at the beauty and holiness of Our Lord's doctrine. Yet, many drew no profit from it ; either through negligence or fear of the difficulty or through their attachment to the things of earth, they could not prevail on themselves to put those teachings into practice. Thus the wonderful grace, conferred upon them, became through their own fault the cause of their own condemnation. There were others, however, who not content with merely admiring Our Lord's teachings, in spite of difficulties diligently applied them to their lives. They became saints, and now rejoice for ever in the generous sacrifices they made. I too cannot but find the teachings and example of Jesus an object of admiration ; but if I stop there and through negligence or cowardice fail to put them into practice, what will these divine favours avail me ? They will only become for me a heavier responsibility before my Sovereign Judge. What then shall be my resolution in face of this truth ?

XXXIV. THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee : and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus was also invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him : They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her : Woman, what is that to me and to thee ? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters : Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six waterpots of stone...containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them : Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them : Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water : the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him : Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now (John ii. 1-10).

Ask fervently that this meditation may inspire you with great confidence in Jesus and Mary.

1ST POINT.—Consider the tenderness of Mary's attention. She sees that these poor people will be humbled ; and lest the joy of their marriage festival should be marred, full of compassion, not waiting for an expression of their need, Mary intercedes for them with Jesus. May not I expect her to show still greater compassion towards me when I express to her my spiritual needs ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the boundless confidence she has in the goodness of Jesus. She merely puts before Him the need without any supplication ; and although Jesus appears unwilling to grant her request, she feels sure that she will obtain it. Aware of His kindness and love towards her, she knows that He will refuse her nothing. Let me learn from her example to put all my wants with simplicity and full confidence in the hands of Our Lord and never to distrust His loving providence in all my difficulties and undertakings. Reflect on the power of Mary over the Heart of her Divine Son and resolve to put yourself under her special protection.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Mary bids the waiters do all that Jesus will command them. They obey with promptitude and the reward ensues. You too would secure the abundance of God's blessings, and open the way for His marvellous operation in your soul, if you gave ear to this counsel of Mary, viz., to do whatsoever Jesus wills. The water will be changed into good wine; your soul, however indigent and weak it may have been, will soon be brought to a high state of holiness and perfection.

XXXV. JESUS DRIVES THE MERCHANTS OUT OF THE TEMPLE

The pasch of the Jews was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen; and the money of the changers he poured out, and the tables he overthrew. And to them that sold doves he said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic (John ii. 13-16).

Ask Our Lord to inspire you with a deep reverence for the house of God, and to make you understand how pure He wishes your heart to be which is His living temple.

1ST POINT.—Consider how deeply grieved Our Lord felt at the sight of the traffic carried on in the house of His Heavenly Father. Always appearing so merciful and so gentle, He treats those intruders with severity. Yet, this Temple of Jerusalem cannot be compared with our churches in sacredness of character. Understand then what grief every act of irreverence must cause Jesus, especially when committed by those whom He has appointed guardians of His sanctuary.

2ND POINT.—Consider what an intense love Our Lord has shown for us by remaining with us in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. So sensitive for the honour due to God's house, He condescended to abide with us in the Eucharist though He foresaw the outrages and profanations that would be heaped upon Him. Should we not then try to repair by our love and reverence the ingratitude of those who thus offend His Infinite Majesty?

3RD POINT.—Consider how our hearts are the living temples of God. We should therefore fear to incur His indignation by desecrating them. We should be watchful to keep them free from every stain caused by worldly attachments, from the turmoil caused by unruly passions, and from the leprous odour caused by sin, so offensive to His Divine Majesty. Resolve to acquire a great purity of heart by making diligent use of all the means at your disposal in order to its attainment.

XXXVI. THE JEWS EXPELLED FROM THE TEMPLE MURMUR AGAINST OUR LORD

The Jews, therefore, answered and said to him : What sign dost thou shew unto us, seeing thou dost these things ? Jesus answered and said to them : Destroy this temple ; and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said : Six and forty years was this temple in building ; and wilt thou raise it up in three days ? But he spoke of the temple of his body (John ii. 18-21).

Fervently ask Our Lord to teach you to accept in the proper spirit the corrections you receive either from God Himself or from your superiors.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the severe punishment, inflicted by Our Lord on those who were profaning the Temple, was an outcome of His love for them. He wanted to impress upon them the necessary lesson of reverence in the house of God, and thus save them from a severer punishment in the next life. In this way, God often shows His mercy by chastising us in this world ; and we are thus led to atone for our sins, to purify our hearts and detach them from the things of earth, lest when we appear before His judgment-seat we may be liable to a more severe penalty. We should likewise keep in mind that the corrections of our superiors are dictated by a spirit of love for us. They foresee the dangers that may arise for ourselves as well as for others, if we should fail to correct certain faults and defects, and by their timely warning, set us on our guard. If we were deeply convinced of these truths, would we not thank God for the trials He sends us, and be grateful to our superiors whenever they happen to reprimand us ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the bad spirit in which the Jews received the correction of Our Lord. They murmured against Him for what He had done, and instead of reaping profit from the correction, it served only to alienate them more from Our Lord. The medicine He offered them, they changed into a deadly poison. Do we not act sometimes in a similar manner when through lack of faith we rebel against the trials God sends us or against the just reprimands of our superiors. Thus, instead of advancing us in perfection, and thereby rendering us dearer to God and more worthy of His graces, they only serve to fill our hearts with bitterness and cast us into discouragement; in this way corrections become for us a source of new faults. Let us reflect on the injurious effect such conduct has on our soul, and resolve to be on our guard for the future.

XXXVII. NICODEMUS VISITS JESUS BY NIGHT

And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him : Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God ; for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him (John iii. 1-2).

Fervently ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart an ardent desire of acquiring the science of the saints.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Nicodemus conceived a great desire to hear Our Lord and to learn from Him the way to sanctity and perfection. He had witnessed the miracles of Jesus and rightly concluded that they gave testimony of a Teacher sent by God. Accordingly he was eager to take advantage of this occasion to advance in the knowledge of God and of His law. We know Jesus better than Nicodemus did at that time. We know Him not only as One sent by God, but as the Son of God endowed with infinite wisdom and holiness. We can therefore learn a great deal more from Jesus, provided we listen to His inspirations, open our hearts to His divine teaching, and are ready to put in practice the knowledge He imparts to us. Seek then frequent converse with Our Lord and try to remain united with Him in mind and heart.

2ND POINT.—Consider the dispositions with which Nicodemus approached Jesus. He was himself a teacher and was one of the princes of the Jews; he was more advanced in years than Our Lord; yet, in great humility he comes to Him, as one who needed to be taught. In union with this disposition of humility Nicodemus showed extreme eagerness to acquire that heavenly wisdom which surpasses all the wisdom of the world. Reflect on the need we have of both these dispositions if we wish Our Lord to enlighten and teach us. Is it in this spirit that we approach Our Lord in prayer, and listen to His teaching in our spiritual readings and instructions? If not, resolve to acquire these dispositions.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Nicodemus through fear of the Jews came to Our Lord at night. This mode of action might have deservedly met with a refusal of Our Lord to hold converse with him; but Jesus whose Heart is full of mercy did not repel him. Perhaps negligence and want of generosity have so far distinguished our behaviour in God's service; through fear of sacrifice, we have not openly espoused His call to follow Him in the path of the cross. Nevertheless Jesus has been very patient with us, and is always ready to teach us. Thank Him for His mercy, renew your confidence in Him, and resolve to be more assiduous in His true following.

XXXVIII. JESUS EXPLAINS TO NICODEMUS THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION

Jesus answered and said to him : Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting (John iii. 3, 14, 15).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him better, and to love Him more.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord :—" Unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." On the day of your baptism you received this supernatural life without which no one can enter heaven. Truly, it is a wonderful gift of God. If you have preserved it intact, you may

deem yourself happy, for no treasure in this world can compare with that which gives you a right to enter the kingdom of God. Foolish and wicked, indeed, are those who, for some vile satisfaction, cast away such a precious treasure. Yet, this is what we have done, if we have ever committed mortal sin. We have thus deserved to be for ever rejected by God. How sincere then should be our contrition, and what fervent thanks we owe to God Who, in His infinite mercy, has restored to us what we had so wantonly thrown away ! How firm should be my purpose of never losing that treasure again !

2ND POINT.—Consider the words :—“ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” These words of Jesus were soon to be verified to the letter ; He was lifted up on the cross. Let us look at Him and believe in Him with a living faith ; thus we shall find in Him life everlasting. We believe that He is the Son of God—the sinless One, reduced to this condition in punishment for our sins. Think of the havoc sin has wrought in Him, and thus beget in your soul a horror of it. He underwent this cruel death for our sake so that by looking on Him we might fly from sin and render up to Him Who has so loved us, our whole hearts in gratitude and confidence. Thus believing in Him we shall have life eternal. Firmly resolve to recall frequently to mind your crucified Saviour so that you may reap these fruits of His sacred passion.

XXXIX. JESUS EXPLAINS TO NICODEMUS GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR MANKIND

For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son (John iii. 16).

Fervently ask in this meditation that God may make you understand better His wonderful love for you, and fill your heart with gratitude towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great gift God has conferred upon us by giving us His Son. However numerous and precious be the gifts we have received from God, none can compare with this. What better proof could God have given, of

the immense love He bears us ? What then do I give Him in return ? Where are the proofs of my love for God ? Do I render Him what I value most in my life, or is my love limited to mere words, and not proved by my actions ?

2ND POINT.—Consider those to whom God in His immense love gave His only-begotten Son—men, who by nature are only His lowly servants, who had risen in rebellion against Him, who had offended Him most grievously by innumerable sins, who had abandoned Him to become the slaves of His worst enemy. Deserving nothing but His anger and just retribution, they received from Him instead His Only Son through Whom they might be rescued and brought to life everlasting. When we recall God's great mercy towards us, ought not our hearts be filled with sorrow for having offended such infinite Goodness ? Let us then by our gratitude and fervour try to repay so great a Benefactor Who has deigned, through His Divine Son, to blot out our past offences.

3RD POINT.—Consider how God has given us His Son to be ours entirely. His Body and Blood are ours to sanctify and strengthen us ; His Sacred Heart is ours to be our refuge as well as an inexhaustible source of divine favours ; His life is ours to be our model ; His death is ours to wash away our sins ; His glory in heaven is ours to be our consolation and our hope. Jesus is our King, our Saviour and our Friend ; He is a Victim of atonement for our sins ; He is our Guide on the way of perfection and will one day be our Reward in heaven. Have we not reason to be ashamed of our want of generosity towards God Who has been so generous towards us ? Can we offer Him in return anything less than our whole self—all we are and all we possess, our body with its senses, our soul with all its faculties, our work and our life ?

XL. ST. JOHN HUMBLY AND JOYFULLY RETIRES BEFORE JESUS

Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea : and there he abode with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ennon...And there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews, concerning purification. And they came to John and said to him : Rabbi, he that was

with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony : behold, he baptizeth and all men come to him. John answered and said : A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness that I said that I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him... This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase : but I must decrease (John iii. 22—30).

Ask fervently that you may learn always to put Our Lord's interests before your own.

1ST POINT.—Consider the humility and abnegation of St. John ; he had been baptizing for a long time ; thousands had flocked to him and his ministry had produced great fruit. Now, he sees the people abandoning him to follow Jesus ; no shadow of anger or regret is observed in him, no expression of dissatisfaction escapes him ; on the contrary, he openly rejoices at the success of Jesus, although it be at the expense of his own. He deems it a favour of God that he should be allowed to decrease in order that Jesus may be glorified. If I were truly humble, I would rejoice at the humiliations God sends me since I know that they give me an occasion of glorifying my Divine Master ; nay, I should deem myself honoured in being called upon to undergo humiliations for the name of Jesus. Examine how you act when you find yourself slighted or wronged in any manner. Try to imitate the example of St. John.

2ND POINT.—Consider the contrast in the conduct of St. John's disciples. They are dissatisfied at the success of Jesus' preaching, they murmur, they seem even to accuse Our Lord of ingratitude towards St. John ; they exaggerate what they consider a slight on their teacher and on themselves. Under cover of zeal for their teacher they unwittingly display their self-love and self-esteem ; John's decreasing fame will likewise decrease their importance. Do we not also experience in our hearts similar effects of self-love ? Do we not, under pretext of zeal for God's glory, sometimes indulge in envy, uncharitableness, gloomy thoughts and discouragement at the success of others ? How much more beautiful in God's sight, and how productive of merit and peace of mind was the conduct of St. John ! Resolve to imitate it.

XLI. THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (*1st Meditation*)

He cometh therefore to a city of Samaria, which is called Sichar...Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her : Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone into the city to buy meats. Then that Samaritan woman saith to him : How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink who am a Samaritan woman ? For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans (John iv. 5-9).

Ask humbly that Our Lord may make you better understand His goodness and mercy and thus excite in your heart feelings of confidence and love towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider Our Lord wearied out by the journey and the toil of the day. His fatigue and weariness is for us, His poor creatures. The Lord of heaven and earth subjects Himself to this toil and labour in order to teach us the way to heaven. What answer shall we be able to give Him on the day of judgment, if we have neglected to practise His holy lessons ? What shame, what ingratitude, what irreparable loss to ourselves, if we have failed to work into our lives this teaching which the Son of God has imparted to us at the cost of such great toil !

2ND POINT.—Consider the purpose of Jesus in waiting by the well of Jacob. He knows that He will meet there that poor sinful woman whose conversion He will obtain. She belonged to a race bitterly hostile to the Jews ; her life of sin might have rendered her an object of contempt : but Jesus sees in her soul, however deeply disfigured by sin, the image of His Heavenly Father and He thirsts for her salvation. Let us learn from this beautiful example of the Saviour to be zealous in labouring for the conversion of sinners. Reflect also on His great mercy towards you ; when He could have justly punished you, He waited for you till you were willing to give Him your heart. Thank Him and resolve to show proofs of your gratitude to Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus requests a drink from this woman. He need not have asked, for He had thousands

of angels to serve Him ; but he wanted to give this woman an occasion of doing Him a service that in return He might offer her the invaluable gift of His grace. Does not this show us how Our Lord constantly deals with us ? He is in need of none of our services, yet He requests of us innumerable little sacrifices for His sake that He may richly recompense us. How eager then I should be in seizing those occasions of self-sacrifice, never deeming the least of them insignificant in His eyes ! Through them I shall procure heavenly riches, and hereafter secure my eternal happiness.

XLII. THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (*2nd Meditation*)

Jesus answered and said to her : If thou didst know the gift of God and who he is that saith to thee : Give me to drink ; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water (John iv. 10).

Fervently ask Our Lord to make you firmly resolve never to refuse Him anything.

1ST POINT.—Consider the reason why the Samaritan woman refuses Jesus His request. She does not know Him ; she merely recognises Him as a Jew—an enemy of her own race. Had she then known Him she would gladly have acceded to His request as her subsequent conduct proved. We however know Jesus, not as an enemy, but as our God, our Creator, our Supreme Benefactor and our Saviour. How can we refuse Him anything who desires only our welfare and eternal happiness ? We have only to gain by what He asks of us. He thirsts for our love, He longs to see us meek, humble, obedient and pure of heart, that we may become more worthy of His love, and that we may merit a more beautiful place in heaven. Should we not then deem it base ingratitude, to refuse Him anything ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words :—“ If thou didst know the gift of God ” etc. Surely, this poor Samaritan would not have acted as she did, had she been aware of the graces Jesus had in store for her ; nay, she would rather have eagerly implored Our Lord’s favour. Let us then recall to mind the

inestimable value of God's grace. So great is this gift that God alone can bestow it; so great, that it had to be purchased by the precious Blood of Jesus; so great, that it secures for us the eternal joy of heaven. If I always kept this in mind, would I ever lose an opportunity of acquiring such a gift? how careful I would be not to lose it! how fervently I would pray for it, and how I would make every endeavour to render myself more worthy of it! nothing, that Our Lord demands of me would I refuse.

XLIH. THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (3rd Meditation)

The woman saith to him : Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep. From whence then hast thou living water?...Jesus answered and said to her : whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting. The woman saith to him : Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw (John, iv. 11, 13-15).

Ask Our Lord to make you realise better the vanity of the things of earth, and to fill your heart with an ardent desire of heavenly things.

1st POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord :—"Who-soever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Men thirst for the honours, pleasures and riches of the world. To obtain a little esteem or wealth or some paltry pleasure they will undergo severe trials and hardships; and then, like the Samaritan, their thirst will be only satiated for a short time, and they will feel themselves forced to renew again the same labour. Thus they spend their lives in a vain effort to satisfy fully their vanity and ambition; and not until death is about to separate them from all, do they come to a clear understanding of the foolishness and emptiness of what they have been seeking. They drank of the world's pleasures and their thirst was renewed afresh, for these things cannot satisfy the cravings of the soul. Do I keep this truth present to my mind?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words which Our Lord then adds :—“ but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever ” etc. They indeed are truly blessed who, contemning the things of earth, thirst for the things of God, and seek in Him their peace and satisfaction. Our Lord Himself will quench their thirst. In His love, He will give them peace and joy such as the world cannot give—a foretaste of their eternal beatitude. This is proved for me in the lives of the saints. What then does my reason suggest? Is it not to say with the Samaritan woman, Lord give me this water that I may not thirst? Let me seek only Thy grace and Thy love for this is enough for me. Resolve to do all you can to render yourself more worthy to receive this great favour.

XLIV. JESUS MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The woman saith to him : I know that the Messias cometh (who is called Christ) : therefore, when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith to her : I am he, who am speaking with thee...The woman therefore left her waterpot and went her way into the city and saith to the men there : Come, and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ?...So when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired that he would tarry there. And he abode there two days. And many more believed in him, because of his own word. And they said to the woman : We now believe, not for thy saying : for we ourselves have heard him and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world (John iv. 25-29, 40-42).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of remaining united to Him and of learning from Him the science of the saints.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the all-seeing eye of Jesus penetrates the heart of this sinful woman. He gently discloses to her the wickedness of her life ; no word of reproach escapes Him, but He tries to awaken her belief and confidence in Him so that He may save her soul. We cannot sufficiently admire the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus towards this sinner, when we think of the hatred He had of sin. Does not Jesus treat me in a similar manner? If I have ever committed a

mortal sin, I have rebelled against God, abused of His gifts, turned my heart away from Him ; I have given the allegiance, due to Him alone, to His direst enemy. Notwithstanding this, how mercifully and how lovingly He has treated me ! When He might have justly cast me into hell, He gently brought me back to Himself, stirred up my faith and confidence in Him that I might repent and He might pardon me. What a debt of gratitude I owe Him, and how I should profit by my experience of His kindness !

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Samaritan woman at once brings others to Our Lord that they may share with her the benefits of His mercy. When I remember all that Jesus has done for me, have I not still greater reason for sacrificing myself in order to bring back souls to Him ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Samaritans, having come and heard the word of Jesus, believed :—“ We now believe, not for thy saying ; for we ourselves have heard him and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.” We likewise have often heard, on the testimony of the saints, of the happiness of those who are generous in God’s service ; but we cannot fully realise the truth of this happiness till we ourselves experience it. We must therefore go to Jesus, retain Him with us as the Samaritans did, converse with Him and listen to His teaching. Thus we shall learn the science of the saints.

XLV. JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES ZEAL FOR SOULS

In the meantime the disciples prayed him, saying : Rabbi, eat. But he said to them : I have meat to eat which you know not. The disciples therefore said one to another : Hath any man brought him to eat ? Jesus saith to them : My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work. Do not you say : There are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh ? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries. For they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting (John iv. 31-36).

Humbly ask Our Lord to awaken in your heart an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Heart of Jesus is burning with zeal for the salvation of souls. He has been working and travelling on foot all day ; and when the time has come to take some food and rest, His thoughts are only occupied with those poor Samaritans who are coming to Him and whom He wishes to instruct and save. When we reflect on what Our Lord has done for us, should not gratitude alone urge us to satisfy this ardent craving of His Heart ? Hence let us do all we can by our prayers, by the example of our lives, by our daily occupations, to gain for Him those souls that are so dear to Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider these words of Jesus :—“ lift up your eyes and see the countries for they are white already to harvest.” Do you likewise look around. How many poor infidels do you not see living without the knowledge of their God ? If they knew Him as you do, they would love and serve Him. Look at those thousands of Christians still so imperfectly instructed and hence so little concerned about sin and its eternal punishment. Think how dreadful it is that so many thousands should rush into eternal perdition. Can you contemplate such a spectacle without being moved to exert yourself to your utmost to procure their salvation ? How can you afford to lose your time when so much is to be done ?

3RD POINT.—Consider the words :—“ he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting.” What a great reward he might expect who had saved the life of a king’s son ! But a soul is far dearer to Jesus than his son is to an earthly monarch ; for Jesus died for it on a cross. Great therefore is the reward we may expect from Him, if we save one of His dear children from eternal death. Firmly resolve to devote yourself to a work so pleasing to God and so advantageous to yourself.

XLVI. JESUS IS DRIVEN FROM NAZARETH

And coming into his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, so that they wondered and said : How came this man by this wisdom and miracles ? Is not this the carpenter’s son ? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Jude ? And his sisters ; are they not all with us ? Whence therefore hath he all these things ? And they were scandalized in his regard. But Jesus said to

them : A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house. And he wrought not many miracles there because of their unbelief (Matt. xiii. 54-58).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make Himself better known to you, and to give you a deep reverence and love for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus came to His own country impelled by an ardent love and desire to do good among His own people ; He wished to give them many graces, to teach them the way to heaven and to work miracles in their favour. Little did they consider the honour and privilege that Our Lord had thus conferred upon them. He was closely concerned about them ; they were not concerned about Him. Jesus too occupies Himself with us in a peculiar manner ; we are special objects of His love ; He comes to us in order to confer on us His most abundant favours. How do we receive Him ? Do we accept His visit as an honour and a privilege, or show ourselves unconcerned about Him ? How grateful we should be for such a marvellous condescension in our God Who not only visits us but lives with us, as friend with friend, as father with child, oblivious, as it were, of His own infinite greatness and our nothingness !

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus hid His greatness in order to accommodate Himself to the lowliness of the people of Nazareth. This very act of Jesus, instead of winning from them love and admiration, caused them to look down on Him and to despise His person and teaching. Shall we not accuse ourselves of similar conduct ? Jesus might have dwelt in our midst as a mighty king ; He might have overawed us by His power and greatness. But His love dictated otherwise ; He preferred to remain hidden in the tabernacle to nourish our souls under the semblance of food : and alas, He is far from thus winning our gratitude and love, we forget Who He is, and what reverence we owe Him. Let our past ingratitude inspire us with feelings of repentance.

3RD POINT.—Consider the terrible consequence that befell the Nazarenes for their ingratitude. Instead of conferring on them the favours He had intended, we are told that Jesus withdrew, and it is not mentioned that He ever returned to Nazareth. What would have become of us had Jesus thus punished us on occasions when we deserved it ? Thank Him for His mercy, and resolve to show yourself henceforth truly grateful.

XLVII. OUR LORD CURES THE SON OF A JEWISH RULER

And there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capernaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to him and prayed him to come down and heal his son : for he was at the point of death . . . The ruler saith to him : Lord come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him : Go thy way. Thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him : and they brought word, saying, that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him : Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him : Thy son liveth. And himself believed and his whole house (John iv. 46-53).

Ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of ridding yourself of your defects, and to animate you with great confidence in His infinite mercy and power.

1ST POINT.—Consider the anxiety of this Jewish Ruler for his child. He feared lest he might soon be bereft of the boy he loved so well, for death was fast approaching. His hopes however revived when he heard that Jesus had come to the neighbourhood. He knew that Jesus had the power of God, and that He was too merciful to reject those in suffering. Therefore he at once had recourse to Him, and implored Him to hasten down to the aid of his son. This great anxiety for the life of his child was but natural to a loving father and hence, when human means were unavailing, he begged aid of Jesus. Reflect on your own soul, on its value, and on the misfortune you would incur if you lost it. Its weakness, its unruly passions and inordinate affections expose it to the greatest danger. But remember that Jesus is at hand ; He is full of mercy and will support you with His all powerful aid. Resolve to have recourse to Him and pray fervently to Him in your hour of need.

2ND POINT.—Consider the Ruler's gratitude to Our Lord ; he gave himself up entirely to Him as well as His whole household. If after such a benefit from Our Lord he had given any sign of ingratitude, we should have held such

conduct detestable. But have we not reason to charge ourselves with ingratitude towards Jesus? Not only once but perhaps many times Jesus has restored my soul to a new life, when at the point of eternal death, through the merits of His own precious Blood. Am I not then bound in gratitude not only to offer Him the complete oblation of myself, but also to lead back to Him those souls that through blindness have strayed away from His love and knowledge?

XLVIII. THE CALL OF THE FIRST APOSTLES

And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers). And he saith to them : Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men. And they immediately leaving their nets, followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets : and he called them. And they forthwith left their nets and father and followed him (Matt. iv. 18-22.)

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you realise the greatness of your vocation, and to instil in your heart an earnest resolution of rendering yourself more and more worthy of this sublime favour.

1ST POINT.—Consider those whom Jesus chose to become His Apostles—poor ignorant fishermen. Jesus, the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth wished to make them His special friends, His ambassadors and representatives upon earth. He therefore separated them from the rest of mankind, and undertook Himself their education and instruction. He reserved for them special graces in order to render them fit for the great work of saving souls which, in co-operation with Jesus Himself, they were now about to begin. What a great favour and what an eminent dignity Jesus thus conferred on them! Surely, it could only be requited in some degree by great and generous sacrifices on their part. Applying this call of the Apostles to your own call to God's service, reflect within yourself and say, "Who am I that God should have selected me from among so many others, that He

should allow me to become His intimate friend, that He should have schooled me with such care in the practice of those virtues so necessary for His work." With feelings of deepest gratitude, humility and confidence, resolve to become daily more worthy of the trust Our Lord reposes in you.

2ND POINT.—Consider the expression Jesus uses in calling His Apostles : Come ye after me. This is what He wants of me no less than He did of them. How can I ever become a true apostle and representative of my Divine Master otherwise than by following in His footsteps and by modelling my life according to the example He has set ? His humility, meekness, obedience, purity of heart, love of God and zeal for souls call for my imitation. These lessons I am taught by Him Who is infinite holiness and wisdom. What can I conceive more to my advantage, and at the same time nobler than to practise them after the example of Jesus !

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Apostles had to abandon all they possessed in order to follow Jesus. Later on they hear from His divine lips that their reward will be exceeding great. No earthly attachment, therefore, must interfere with me in following My Divine Master ; I must be resolved to be possessed entirely by Him ; my life must be wholly devoted to Him. Whatever sacrifice is involved in this manner of life, I must account as nothing in comparison with the glorious reward He promises for such faithful service.

XLIX. THE POSSESSED MAN OF CAPHARNAUM

And in the synagogue there was a man who had an unclean devil ; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying : Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth ? Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying : Hold thy peace and go out of him. And when the devil had thrown him into the midst, he went out of him and hurt him not at all (Luke iv. 33-35).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great and salutary fear of sin, and a strong desire of remaining united to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the unfortunate condition of that man of whose body the devil had taken possession. The thought of falling into such a state strikes us with horror. There is nothing we would not do to escape an evil so great. Nevertheless, is it not a far greater evil for the devil to take possession of one's soul and reign there as supreme master? I should therefore conceive a great fear of falling into mortal sin—no less indeed than the fear of its dread consequences. To have been delivered from this dire enemy of my soul, through the goodness of Our Lord, imposes on me an endless duty of gratitude which I can best show by doing all I can to avoid this terrible fate of becoming subject to Satan through mortal sin.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the devil wishes to keep Our Lord away from his victim that he may retain possession of him. The enemy of our souls is fully aware of his powerlessness in presence of Jesus; when we rely on the protection of Our Divine Master and remain closely united to Him, we are beyond the reach of Satan. Hence his aim is to try to withdraw us from all that tends to bring us nearer to Our Lord, especially the sacraments, prayer and meditation; and if he fails to succeed in this, he tries to make us as negligent as possible in these sacred functions. Fully conscious of these wicked devices of the enemy, I should be truly unreasonable, were I to allow myself to be led into these snares. Should I not then employ all diligence to become more closely united to Jesus, my all powerful Protector? I must resolve in consequence to apply myself generously to the acquisition of a true spirit of prayer.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of the devil:—"I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God." The devil knows Our Lord but he does not love Him; he does what he can to avoid Him. Woe to me, if the devil succeeded in instilling something of this spirit of his into my heart, so that knowing Our Lord in His goodness, mercy, power and readiness to help me, I should notwithstanding keep away from Him, neglect to implore His aid and protection. Let me guard myself against such a danger.

L. JESUS EXPELS THE DEVIL FROM THE POSSESSED MAN

The Gospel narrative is the same as in the preceding meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your resolve to keep close to Him and to trust in His protection.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord silences the devil when the latter proclaims Him to be the Holy One of God. He had nothing to fear from praise, but He desired to teach us by His example to fear the praise of men. It may be that those who praise us are upright in their intention ; but the devil, always on the alert to take advantage of such an occasion, tries to lead us into self-conceit and pride. Often indeed praise is utterly false, being only an attempt to stir up our vanity ; never can it render us better than we really are in the eyes of God. What advantage then can we gain by it ? On the contrary by giving us an occasion of indulging our love of esteem, it may cause us considerable harm. Being convinced of this, resolve never to seek for praise but to avoid it as far as you can.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the devil continues to torment his victim, and only yields him up when forced to by Our Lord ; his last effort to harm him is without effect. Likewise does the devil often seek to torture those he cannot bring into sin ; he troubles them with vain fears and anxieties, but as long as they keep close to Jesus, his efforts are without avail. This consideration should be a source of peace and consolation to those who are sincerely desirous of loving and serving God when assailed by trouble of mind and temptation. Knowing then that the devil is powerless against those whose will is faithfully united with God's, I should resolve to place myself with entire confidence under His omnipotent protection.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the evil spirit dares not resist the command of Jesus to depart from the man. In like manner, should the authority and infinite power of God inspire me with fear of resisting or disobeying an order which I know to be the expression of His Will. If love should fail to urge me to observe His commandments, at least the fear of His judgment should influence my conduct. When I reflect on His greatness and my littleness, can I do otherwise than resolve to obey His slightest wish ?

LI. JESUS CURES THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OF ST. PETER

And Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever : and they besought Him for her. And standing over her, He commanded the fever : and it left her. And immediately rising, she ministered to them (Luke iv. 38-39).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you the necessity of mortifying your passions and to aid you in your resolution of doing so.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this fever which was a cause of serious danger to Simon's mother-in-law reflects the condition of a soul subject to unrestrained passions, and thereby exposed to the serious danger of sin. As fever renders the body restless, so do evil passions cause disquiet in the soul. As a violent fever obscures our higher faculties, so do strong passions deprive us of the right use of reason, and thus lead us into many faults. We desire what is harmful, and reject what is salutary for our soul ; God's service, instead of being a source of joy, becomes tedious, if not loathsome, and our peace and tranquillity of soul is lost. These baneful effects of inordinate passion, I may have often observed in others. Let me therefore keep in mind that the same effect is produced by the same cause, and that if I do not root out my evil passions, I expose myself to the inevitable consequences.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a fortunate circumstance it was for this woman to have had friends who were likewise dear friends of Jesus. They interceded for her, and He heard their prayer. Rejoice and return thanks to God that you have so many friends in heaven who are at the same time most dear to God : the Blessed Virgin, your patron saints, your Guardian Angel. Resolve to have frequent recourse to their powerful intercession, and in particular to ask their help to conquer yourself.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this woman got up at once and ministered to Our Lord. She was eager to show her gratitude towards Him. A like duty of gratitude rests on me who have been so often cured of sin through Our Lord's mercy. Am I eager to prove it to Him by serving Him with

diligence, fidelity and love? How have I acted hitherto in His service? Perhaps I have little realised the greatness of the benefit of having been saved from the greatest of evils—sin, and in consequence am not duly grateful for it. I should therefore resolve to give proof of my gratitude to my greatest Benefactor.

LII. THE MULTITUDE GATHERS ROUND JESUS . TO SEEK HIS AID

And when the sun was down, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them to him. But he, laying his hands on every one of them, healed them... And when it was day, going out he went into a desert place: (and there he prayed, Mark i. 35) and the multitudes sought him, and came unto him. And they stayed him that he should not depart from them (Luke iv. 40, 42).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him better, to love Him more ardently and follow His example more generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider the wonderful kindness of Our Lord towards that great multitude which gathers round Him. He willingly exercised His power on their behalf; He devotes Himself entirely to their interests. Though He has been preaching the whole day, and now, when night has set in, He might claim some time for repose, yet He cannot send away all those sick people. The sympathy of His Heart goes out to them; whatever favour they ask of Him, He grants; He desires no rest while they are in need of Him. Cheerfully and with inexhaustible patience He condoles with them in affliction, consoles them and heals their diseases. What a beautiful example He thus sets His apostles, and His future priests and ministers! He desired to teach us how, in devoting ourselves to the service of our neighbour, we must forget our own comfort and inclinations for their sake, and cheerfully submit to the annoyance and trouble of our daily life when the good of souls demands it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord, after having been busily occupied till far into the night, rises early in the morning to pray. In this way He conveys the lesson, that however

great be the stress of exterior work, His ministers must never neglect fervent prayer and must even seek time for it. For the efficacy and fruitfulness of their labours, being wholly dependent on God, can only be secured by intercourse with Him. Do I understand the importance and necessity of this constant practice of prayer ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how the people constrain Our Lord to remain with them ; eagerly do they implore Him not to depart. His kindness and mercy towards them has won their love ; to abide in His presence is now their sole desire. With delight and admiration they listen to the beautiful and holy lessons He teaches them. He not only exercises His power to cure but also to instruct. Remembering that Jesus is always the same, do I constrain Him to remain with me, do I love to abide in His presence and listen to His divine counsels so that my soul may be healed and purified ? Aware of His power and His readiness to help me in my needs, I should resolve to remain united with Him.

LIII. THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

And it came to pass, that when the multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth, and saw two ships standing by the lake : but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And going into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, he taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon : Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said to him : Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing ; but at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes ; and their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking (Luke v. 1-7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of becoming more closely united to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the multitudes gathering round Our Lord. All wish to be near Him that they may hear the word of life that falls from His lips. With attention and

eagerness they drink in His every word ; no utterance of Jesus escapes them. If we too desire to learn His holy lessons, we must keep close to Him and put aside all the obstacles that prevent us from hearing Him—such as the noise and tumult of the world, the turmoil of our passions, all stain of sin and attachment to it. Thus shall we be the better able to open our hearts to Him, and He will the more readily impart to us that greatest lesson of all—the science of the saints. Be convinced of this, and of the great advantages you may derive from His holy teaching. Form suitable resolutions.

2ND POINT.—Consider the joy of St. Peter on seeing his Divine Master coming into his ship. Jesus hath shown His regard for him. In like manner does Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, the God of infinite holiness and majesty desire to fix His abode in my poor sinful heart. What an honour and regard He thus shows me ! I should then put forth all my endeavours to render my heart as pleasant a dwelling-place for Him as my poverty can afford. He may request me also to withdraw a little from the land—from some inordinate affection to the things of earth. Willingly should I comply with the request of One so great and holy whose good pleasure at this sacrifice will draw His blessings upon me.

3RD POINT.—Consider what a wonderful success attended the labours of St. Peter owing to the presence of Our Lord ; in vain had Peter laboured throughout the night ; at the word of his Divine Master, his nets are filled. Thus alone we can do nothing ; united in mind and heart with Our Lord, we may be assured of abundant fruits of sanctification both for ourselves and others.

LIV. THE EFFECT OF THIS MIRACLE ON ST. PETER

Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying : Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken (Luke v. 8-9).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you better realise His Infinite Majesty and your own nothingness.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Peter at once acknowledges the divine power of Jesus. He was perfectly aware that this wonderful draught of fishes was not due to any skill or experience of his own, but to the mere word of Our Lord. Accordingly he renders Him all glory. We indeed should find it strange for Peter to have done otherwise ; and yet, we do not find it strange in ourselves when we attribute any success we attain to our personal skill, and altogether forget to thank and glorify the 'Giver of all good. Repeatedly we discover our powerlessness and weakness when left to ourselves. God thus makes us feel our own nothingness, and that whatever good we happen to achieve is entirely due to Him. Imitate St. Peter in acknowledging the work of God when you happen to succeed.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Peter, far from priding himself on what has happened, is overwhelmed with awe and reverence in presence of this divine manifestation. He is forcibly impressed with the thought of God's presence, and yielding to his first impulse, he falls down at the feet of his Divine Master. Although perhaps, through the want of exercise of our faith, we do not sufficiently realise it, yet we are always in that awful Presence. Truly, if our hearts were penetrated with this thought, they would become humble, modest, recollected and deeply reverent in time of prayer. No deliberate fault would find entrance into our souls.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this great miracle, which Jesus has worked in favour of St. Peter, becomes for the latter an occasion of humbling himself more deeply. God's great benevolence towards him, instead of begetting conceit in his heart, serves only to fill it with a deeper sense of his own unworthiness. So was it with the saints : the more favoured they were by God and the greater gifts He bestowed on them, the more deeply did they recognise their own unworthiness. In like manner I should keep in mind that whatever good is in me I have received it from God, and thus better understand my absolute dependence on Him, and the debt of gratitude I owe Him.

LV. JESUS CURES A LEPER

And behold a leper came and adored him, saying : Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him saying : I will. Be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed (Matt. viii. 2, 3).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make known to you His infinite mercy, and to stir up within you a great confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider to what a miserable condition this loathsome disease has reduced this poor leper who approaches Our Lord. Covered with hideous sores, emitting an offensive odour, his body is slowly rotting away in corruption. His very appearance is a source of horror and disgust. Leprosy is an image of sin ; except that sin works greater havoc on the soul, destroying in it its supernatural life. Sin disfigures God's image in the soul no less than leprosy disfigures the body. The soul, once so beautiful, becomes through sin an object of horror in the eyes of God and His angels. As a leper is like a living corpse, so is a soul stained by mortal sin. As leprosy cannot be cured by any human means, so does it require the almighty power of God to cleanse a soul from sin. Reflecting on this try to increase in your heart a horror of sin, and to strengthen your resolve to avoid it and all that may lead to it.

2ND POINT.—Consider the great mercy of Jesus towards this unhappy leper. Spurned from the society of men, he lives as an outcast ; but Jesus allows him to approach, and the deep compassion of His loving Heart is aroused at his wretched condition. The leper's cry of anguish and confidence prevails ; Jesus stretches forth His hand, and forthwith he is healed. His mercy towards us is in no degree less ; notwithstanding His horror of sin, He does not cast us off, but allows us to approach Him ; the greater our misery, the deeper is His compassion. He stretches forth His helping hand and cleanses us again from all stain of sin. O merciful Jesus, how can I ever thank Thee sufficiently for such mercy ! May I never lose confidence in thy mercy and compassion ! Instil into my heart something of Thy mercy and compassion towards sinners.

3RD POINT.—Consider the omnipotent power of Jesus who by one word heals this poor leper from a disease which human skill fails to alleviate. Remember that His power has not

lessened. If then I feel unable to overcome my evil inclinations, His power is at my disposal. He can and certainly will help me. Let me then, like this poor leper, appeal to Him from my heart with the assured confidence that He will hear my prayer.

LVI. JESUS CURES A PARALYTIC

And behold, men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy : and they sought means to bring him in and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof and let him down through the tiles with his bed into the midst before Jesus. Whose faith when he saw, he said : Man, thy sins are forgiven thee And the scribes and Pharisees began to think saying : Who is this who speaketh blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins, but God alone ? And when Jesus knew their thoughts, answering, he said to them ; What is it you think in your hearts ? Which is easier to say : Thy sins are forgiven thee ; or to say : Arise and walk ? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee : Arise. take up thy bed and go into thy house. And immediately rising up before them, he took up the bed on which he lay : and he went away to his own house, glorifying God. And all were astonished : and they glorified God. (Luke v. 18-26).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him better and to love Him more.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus is pleased with the simple faith and confidence of these men. He rewards them by working a miracle in their favour. He will be equally pleased with you if you practise these same virtues. You know Him better than these people did ; you have seen more and even greater examples of His infinite mercy and power. As He healed this man's body and soul, so will He heal you of all your spiritual ailments.

2ND POINT.—Consider the charity of these people towards their afflicted companion. Ardentlly do they desire to see him restored to health. They spare themselves no inconvenience. When they fail to reach Jesus through the ordinary entrance of the house, they ascend upon the roof and let down the

paralytic into the midst before Jesus. Full of charity Himself Our Divine Lord is pleased to see them also exercise it; for what is done for the least of His children He considers as done for Himself. Thus you may render yourself dear to Him, and win for yourself His choicest blessings, by generously sacrificing yourself for the bodily and spiritual welfare of others. Reflect on how you practise charity in your daily life: see what practical resolution you might adopt in order to progress in this virtue so highly esteemed by Our Lord.

3RD POINT.—Consider the rash judgment passed by the Pharisees on the words and action of Our Lord. Priding themselves on their own righteousness, they little realised how plainly Our Lord read into their hearts. They are punished by having their uncharitable thoughts, their jealousy and pride exposed before all. Should I not fear to indulge in thoughts of uncharitableness, envy or pride, when I reflect on the hatred Our Lord has of these vices, and on His all-seeing eye ever penetrating the inmost recesses of my soul?

LVII. THE CALL OF ST. MATTHEW

And after these things, he went forth and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said to him: Follow me. And leaving all things, he rose up and followed him (Luke v. 27-28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen in your heart the resolve to be always faithful to the call of divine grace.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Matthew before becoming an Apostle was a publican or tax-collector. This class of people was regarded by the Jews with peculiar aversion; they were looked upon as sinners, extortioners, and as men given to injustice. When therefore Jesus raised Matthew to the membership of His apostolic college, and conferred upon him the power of working miracles, the latter never forgot from what a despised condition Our Lord had raised him, and this thought became for him a constant motive of the deepest humility and gratitude. Let me reflect on who I am that Our Lord should have chosen me from among so many others. I am not a sinner in name only as Matthew was, but perhaps what is

worse, a sinner in deed. Nevertheless Jesus chose me in order to invest me with the wonderful dignity of priest and apostle. How it behoves me to cherish always sentiments of humility and gratitude !

2ND POINT.—Consider the manner of Matthew's call. Jesus is passing by and merely addresses the words to him :—Follow me. If Matthew had disregarded this invitation or postponed the execution of Our Lord's command, his neglect would have met with its retribution. Thus, a call of divine grace may often come to us in the course of our life, and on its acceptance depends a multitude of other graces. Reflect on the great loss to which we may expose ourselves by infidelity to such calls. Resolve to be always in the disposition ready to yield up promptly whatever Our Lord may demand of you.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Matthew answers the call of Our Lord :—he arose and followed Him. Important temporal concerns hold him engaged ; his prompt action will entail considerable loss ; the world will judge his conduct, foolishness ; his friends and relations will deride or even reproach him ;—yet, none of these considerations has any influence on his decision to follow Our Lord at once. His wisdom directed him aright, and now, in the abode of bliss, he is enjoying the fruit of his generous and prompt sacrifice. Thus, each sacrifice I make to follow Jesus more closely on the way of perfection will become for me a source of eternal and unspeakable joy.

LVIII. ST. MATTHEW ENTERTAINS JESUS AT A BANQUET

And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that were at table with them. But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying to his disciples : Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners ? And Jesus answering, said to them : They that are whole need not the physician : but they that are sick. I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance (Luke v. 29-32).

Ask Our Lord to teach you to set a high value on His visits and to be truly grateful for His great mercy towards you.

1ST POINT.—Consider the gratitude of Matthew towards Jesus for having been admitted among His disciples. He evinces it by the banquet he prepares in honour of Our Lord. His friends are invited to do honour to this renowned Guest. Humbly he requests Our Lord to attend; and great is his joy when Jesus accepts his invitation : his gratitude is unbounded at the condescension of Our Lord. You likewise owe a debt of gratitude to your God and Saviour. Imitate Matthew by preparing for Him a great feast in your heart. Adorn it with the virtues you know to be dear to Jesus ; let these be a token of the gratitude He expects to find in you when He comes to visit you. Cultivate also in your heart a spirit of deep reverence for Our Lord so that, when he comes to you, you may receive Him with becoming honour and respect. Assuredly, He deserves from you an effort to give Him such a reception.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this visit of Jesus became for Matthew a new source of graces. It welded more tightly the bonds by which he had been already attached to Our Lord, and thus this closer relationship gave rise to a new means of sanctity. Reflect, how Jesus visits you not only once but daily. Are these daily visits fruitful in advancing you on the road of perfection and sanctity? Does each of them bind you more closely to Our Lord? Such will be the case if, like Matthew, you try to receive Him with all the affection, love and respect you can give Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider the marvellous condescension of of Our Lord in sitting down at table in company with publicans. When the Pharisees murmur against Him, He replies by stating the object of His mission :—I have come not to call the just but sinners to penance. Jesus loves the souls of these fallen people ; He regards them as His children, and full of mercy, He comes to them to draw them to Himself and save them. What would have become of me, if this was not the object of Our Lord's coming into the world? With reason therefore should I thank Our Lord from my heart, and derive from this consoling thought an immense confidence in One so good and so tenderly compassionate towards my wretchedness.

LIX. THE POOL OF BETHSAIDA

After these things was a festival day of the Jews : and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem a pond called Probatia, which in Hebrew is named Bethesda having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered : waiting for the moving of the water. And an angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under (John v. 1-4).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a true desire of amendment and renewal of your interior life by having recourse to all the means He offers you for that end.

1ST POINT.—Consider all those sick, blind and lame people lying near the pool of Bethesda. All eagerly desire to be cured of their infirmities, and when the Angel moves the water, each of them does all he can to be the first to enter it. They wait there patiently and perseveringly, and each time they renew their efforts. Reflect on the state of your soul, afflicted perhaps with many infirmities, blind in regard of heavenly things, lame and weak in walking steadily in the path of perfection, deaf to the counsels and warnings of Our Lord. Try to realise well how much more dangerous are the diseases of the soul than those of the body, and you will not be less desirous to get rid of all those miseries than the crippled and diseased people by the pool desired to get rid of the infirmities of their bodies. Should you show less perseverance than they, even though you cannot succeed at once in striving to amend and renew your interior life ?

2ND POINT.—Consider what a great favour God was conferring on the Jews in giving them this miraculous pond. There was no one who was not ready to take advantage of it. Remember that we Christians have in our midst a fountain a thousand times more wonderful than that of Bethesda in which we can be healed of all our infirmities—the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. There we can find strength for our weakness, light for our spiritual blindness, renewed vigour for our lameness, assistance for the practice of every virtue. These favours are not reserved for the one who comes first, but all can obtain them. At Bethesda, many were unable to reach the vivifying waters, but the Heart of

Jesus is accessible to all. I must then attribute it to my own negligence if I fail to participate in the innumerable graces that ceaselessly flow from this Divine Heart. What answer shall I be able to give hereafter to my Supreme Judge for neglecting such a favour ?

LX. JESUS HEALS THE MAN SICK FOR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS

And there was a certain man there that had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity. Him when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that he had been now a long time, he saith to him : Wilt thou be made whole ? The infirm man answered him : Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond. For whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. Jesus saith to him : Arise, take up thy bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole : and he took up his bed and walked (John v. 5-9).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to make generous and persevering efforts towards the correction of your faults and evil propensities.

1ST POINT.—Consider the strength of purpose and steadfastness of effort shown by this man. Without receiving help from someone, there was little chance of his ever reaching the pond in due time and thus being healed. No less should be the perseverance you show in trying to cure your soul of its defects ; nay, as the health of the soul is more to be desired than that of the body so should your efforts in this respect be unrelenting. Moreover you are not abandoned without hope of assistance ; you have Our Lord, Mary, the angels and saints ready to give you aid. Failure in immediately overcoming your faults should never discourage you, for it is your perseverance that has value in the eyes of God.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the persevering efforts of this poor cripple during so many years were all in vain, till the moment when Jesus stood before him and cured him in quite an unexpected manner. In the meantime, how many acts of patience, of resignation to God's holy will in the endurance of his trials did not this man elicit ! Far from

being lost, this time was for him fruitful in acquiring great merits in heaven. In like manner, the time you spend in struggling against your evil propensities, if you do so courageously, will bear fruit in manifold blessings. Your very struggle will tend to render you more humble, more diffident of self, and more confident in God. And then, when Our Lord knows it to be for your good, He will step in and reward your efforts by effecting what you so long strove in vain to accomplish.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord: “Arise, take up thy bed and walk”. To you likewise He says: Arise, take courage, it is especially the first generous step that costs. Take up your bed, take away that obstacle which has kept you so long hampered from advancing in the way of perfection. And walk, advance bravely, I will be with you. How truly Jesus addresses me in these words! Let me try to realise this and, as the saints have done, put in practice these most profitable counsels He imparts to me.

I.XI. JESUS WARNS THE JEWS OF THE COMING JUDGMENT

For neither doth the Father judge any man : but hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son, as they honour the Father... Wonder not at this : for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life : but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment (John v. 22-23, 28-29)

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a greater horror of sin and to strengthen your resolve of serving Him more generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider Who will be the Judge before Whom all men, and you too shall have to appear. This is seen from the words of Jesus concerning His Divinity and Power which He addressed to the Jews after He had effected the miraculous cure at Bethesda. Your Judge will be the Son of God, your Creator from Whom you have received everything, your Saviour Who has died on a cross for love of you, and Who has won for you most abundant graces at the price of His Blood. What answer will you give Him, if through

the abuse of His gifts you have offended Him? If you have robbed Him of the glory that belonged to Him? What excuse will you allege, if through the neglect of His grace you have returned ingratitude for His love? Hasten to prepare yourself and to redeem your past offences by serving God faithfully and generously.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this Judge will weigh in the balance of eternal justice every thought, every desire, every word, action or negligence. The good you have achieved and the evil you have done will each receive its exact retribution. Bitter will then be your regret for the sins you so easily committed, for the time you lost through such carelessness, for each moment of which God will demand an exact account. On the other hand, you will have reason to rejoice greatly, if you have not failed to sacrifice yourself during life. Then will the penance with which you tried to atone for your sins, the sufferings and humiliations which you patiently accepted as your desert, become for you a fount of consolation and heavenly peace. Hence resolve to do now what you will wish then to have done.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the sentence of the Son of God will be irrevocable. Then no tears of repentance, no entreaty or supplication will avail; the time for forgiveness and mercy is passed. Accordingly I should reflect how it lies wholly in my power to make each moment of my life tend to render that final sentence favourable. My condition for eternity will be exactly in accordance with the preparation I am now making for it.

LXII. THE APOSTLES ARE ACCUSED OF BREAKING THE SABBATH

At that time, Jesus went through the corn on the sabbath: and his disciples being hungry began to pluck the ears, and to eat. And the Pharisees seeing them, said to him: Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days. But he said to them: ...if you knew what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice: you would never have condemned the innocent (Matt. xii. 1-2, 7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great detestation of uncharitableness.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Pharisees followed Our Lord, not to derive profit from His divine lessons, but to discover a subject of accusation either in Him or in His Apostles. Full of self-conceit and pride they wished to be the acknowledged leaders of the people, and in consequence envied Our Lord His wonderful fame and influence. They conceived the bitterest feelings against Him and, whenever an opportunity occurred, launched at Him the most unjust accusations. Mark the evil effect of pride in a soul : innumerable graces are lost, many and grave faults are committed, the heart often becomes obdurate in sin, thus leading to eternal perdition.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord defends His Apostles ; He assumes charge of their interests. This was because of their fidelity to Him. In like manner, if we are faithful to Him, we may expect Him to take care of our interests. He will provide that all things, however painful and distasteful they be to us, will turn to our advantage. What a powerful motive this ought to be for us to remain closely united to Him ! And what a consoling thought in all our difficulties !

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Scripture cited by Jesus—"I will have mercy and not sacrifice". We are all in need of God's mercy, but the condition of obtaining His mercy is that we should show mercy towards others. When therefore some word or act on the part of others pains me or causes me displeasure, I should recall this truth :—"In what measure you shall mete it shall be measured to you again" (Mark iv. 24).

LXIII. JESUS HEALS A WITHERED HAND

And he entered again into the synagogue : and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And they watched him whether he would heal on the sabbath days, that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand : Stand up in the midst. And he saith to them : Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil ? To save life, or to destroy ? But they held their peace. And looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts, he saith to the man : Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth. And his hand was restored unto him (Mark iii 1-5).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you by His example with a firm resolution of always doing your duty in spite of difficulty.

1ST POINT.—Consider Our Lord's manner of acting. Here was a good work to be done, not one of obligation, but one that would glorify His Heavenly Father. Our Lord well foresaw that His enemies would find in this miracle another subject of accusation against Him, and a means of enkindling afresh their hatred. But these considerations have no influence on Him ; His sole thought is to give greater glory to His Heavenly Father. He will not therefore be deterred from performing a good work because men will accuse Him, increase their hatred of Him, or even seek to destroy Him. Learn from this to do your duty always no matter at what cost. Try to realise better God's greatness and man's nothingness before Him, and you will then pay more heed to what your Creator thinks of you than to what men may think or say of you.

2ND POINT.—Consider the indignation of Our Lord at the vile hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They try to exhibit themselves as models of virtue not knowing that the deceit and hatred which is filling their hearts is plain to the eyes of Our Lord. Thus God's all-seeing eye is ever penetrating the most hidden depths of your soul. Resolve to hate all hypocrisy and to make your heart pure and agreeable in His sight. Jesus is grieved at the pride of the Pharisees because they are blind to their own perversity and have no hope of correcting themselves. Pride will work similar effects in your soul, if you do not resolve to put it down courageously.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the man with the withered hand acts. He knows that by obeying Jesus he will rouse the anger of the Pharisees. But he pays no heed to their anger for they can do nothing for him. Jesus can and will cure him. Accordingly he obeys Him fearlessly, and is cured instantaneously. Moreover this miraculous favour, leading him to believe in Jesus, sets him on the way to eternal happiness. Say to yourself, "what can I expect from men ? It is from God alone that I can expect any real good." Therefore I must put His will and pleasure foremost in all things.

LXIV. GREAT MULTITUDES FOLLOW JESUS

But Jesus retired with his disciples to the sea : and a great multitude followed him from Galilee and Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond the Jordan.

And they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing the things which he did, came to him (Mark iii. 7-8).

Humbly ask Our Lord to draw your heart more closely to Him, and to fill it with boundless confidence in His goodness.

1ST POINT.—Consider the zeal of the Heart of Jesus. Surrounded by a multitude He has not a moment of repose. How He loves these poor ignorant people ! Full of compassion for their corporal and spiritual miseries, He places Himself entirely at their service, He spends Himself for them. He sees how their souls are ensnared in sin, and He tries to draw their minds and hearts away from it and win them for Himself. There is the example I have to follow, since I am called to work with Jesus for the salvation of souls. His example should actuate me with an ardent zeal to bring souls to God, should inspire me with a generous resolve to do all I can by my teaching, my prayers and my example to render myself a more fit instrument for this end in the hands of God.

2ND POINT.—Consider the multitudes that flock around Jesus. They come from all parts—men, women and children, rich and poor. Their several occupations do not keep them at home ; fatigue, they do not heed ; in their eagerness to come to Jesus and to follow Him, they forget their bodily needs. With joy they listen to the words of salvation that fall from His lips ; they desire only to be near Him ; they have full confidence in Him. Reflect on what Jesus is to you ; how good, how kind, how merciful, and how ready to render you assistance ! You know Him better than these poor people did. With full confidence approach Him that you may learn from Him the science of the saints, that you may be healed from your spiritual miseries and obtain from Him the abundant graces He has in store for those who trust in Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider how none of these poor people are deceived in the hope they place in Our Lord. He does not always cure them of their bodily infirmities because He knows that the cross is good for them. None of them, however, departs from Him without receiving strength and consolation. Their humble confidence is rewarded. Jesus cannot act otherwise towards those in affliction ; He can only show kindness, patience and mercy towards all, notwithstanding all the

trouble they give Him. Remember that Our Lord is always the same, and that He is as ready to reward the confidence you place in Him as He was to reward the confidence of these multitudes.

LXV. JESUS CHOOSES HIS TWELVE APOSTLES

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray : and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when the day was come, he called unto him his disciples : and he chose twelve of them (whom also he named apostles) (Luke vi. 12-18).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you better understand the dignity and the obligations of your vocation.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus before choosing His twelve Apostles passed the whole night in prayer. He wished to impress on them the importance He attached to this choice that they might have a high esteem of the dignity conferred on them. Being made conscious of this great privilege, they would not fail to try to render themselves more worthy of it by, a greater holiness of life and by a more frequent recourse to fervent prayer. You likewise have received a similar favour from Our Lord. Though infinite in majesty and holiness, God has deigned to make you His special friend, His representative and ambassador among men. He has invested you with one of the noblest functions in His creation—the salvation of souls ; its dignity is truly divine. And in reward for your sacrifice and fidelity He bestows on you innumerable graces and is preparing a special place in heaven for you. No holiness however great can deserve such a favour as this. With deepfelt gratitude give thanks to God, and see that you daily render yourself more and more worthy of your noble calling.

2ND POINT.—Consider what Jesus expected from those He had thus chosen. He wished them to lead His own life—a life not only detached from the evil pleasures of the world but one of mortification and virginal purity. They should share His poverty and His labours, and, if need be, like true shepherds they should be ready to give their lives for their

sheep. This is what Jesus expects from all His followers. If through cowardice you do not answer His expectations, remember that He is with you to help you and to console you, and that, apart from your reward hereafter, He will give you on earth that true peace which the world knoweth not, nor can give.

3RD POINT.—Consider how one of those twelve chosen Apostles met with a deplorable fall. All those divine favours that made saints of the other Apostles, were lost for him because he failed to mortify his passions of pride and avarice. Deliberately he shut his heart to the warnings of his Divine Master. Let this terrible example be a perpetual reminder to you to be ever watchful over yourself in order to check and mortify your evil propensities. Fervently beseech Our Lord to make you realise better your obligations, and have full confidence in Him in Whom you can do all things.

LXVI. JESUS OUR TEACHER

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. And when he was set down, his disciples came unto him. And opening his mouth, he taught them (Matt v. 1-2).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a deep reverence for God's word, together with an eager desire to hear it and put it into practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a wonderful condescension it was for God to have come Himself on earth to teach us. Is there any teacher that can be compared to Him? He is infinitely wise and holy; the science He teaches is the most sublime of all, having God and the things of God for its object. At the same time, there is no science more necessary and useful to us than is this divine science which guides us securely towards the end for which we are created. The riches we shall thereby amass, not even death can deprive us of; for they are eternal and cannot decrease. The Apostles understood and practised this science which Jesus taught them, and now they are reaping their reward in endless joy. Do I imitate them? If not, bitter shall be my regret hereafter for neglecting to understand and practise this divine teaching.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a contrast appears in the teaching of Jesus and in the teaching of the world. What the world most esteems, what it deems worthy of the highest endeavour, Our Lord teaches to be vain, nay often fraught with great danger. What the world teaches us to shun, Our Lord teaches us to love and embrace, not only in view of our happiness in the next life but even in this. I know and understand that the words of Jesus express infallible truths. Nevertheless does the practice of my daily life conform to His teaching, or to that of the world? What a lack of wisdom it denotes if I follow what I know to be false !

3RD POINT.—Consider the unhappy state of those who follow the teaching of the world. They are striving to attain happiness by giving full scope to their ambition, pride, sensuality and avarice, but their efforts are vain. If they succeed, their success serves but to stimulate them to make greater efforts towards a good which evades them when seemingly within their grasp. In the end they find themselves a prey to regret and remorse. They have never understood the peace and happiness of the saints who rejoice in the midst of tribulation. Therefore if I follow the maxims of the world, I must share the unhappiness to which they lead both in time and eternity. What then must be my conduct in future ?

LXVII. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Imagine you are at the feet of your Divine Master together with the other Apostles, listening to Him as He utters these words : *Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v. 3).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a clear understanding of these words, and to teach you how to put them into practice.

1ST POINT.—The first obvious sense we may give these words is : Blessed are they whose hearts are entirely detached from the goods and riches of this world. Greed is a source of many sins, and the least evil it causes is that it prevents men from fixing their thoughts and aspirations on the goods of eternity—the only goods we should think of and desire. If this vice finds a place in the heart of a priest, it dries up his spiritual life and may even effect in him as great a downfall

as it did in Judas. Should I then discover any such tendency in my heart I must spare no effort in trying to uproot it. On the other hand, they who are not subject to this vice of greed, but are detached from the goods of the world, are proclaimed blessed by Our Lord. Free and unhampered they may pursue the path of perfection ; and in exchange for the goods they have renounced Our Lord promises them the kingdom of heaven. It was in obedience to this counsel that so many saints renounced all they possessed, to give their lives entirely to God. Thus St. Francis Borgia, St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus and many kings and princes gave up all their wealth in order to become poor with Our Lord and to obtain a share in His kingdom. They indeed were truly wise.

2ND POINT.—These words may bear a second meaning, namely, Blessed are the humble of heart. Jesus loves this virtue of humility, and they who practise it are dear to Him. The humble refer all the glory of their achievements to God and obtain in return God's choicest favours ; they are secure against the assaults of Satan. Thus we can easily understand why humble souls become the objects of God's special love, and why Jesus pronounces them blessed. They indeed shall possess the kingdom of heaven, and already in this world God reigns in their hearts. On the other hand when we reflect on the evils of pride we may perceive how detestable it is in the eyes of God. Pride robs God of the glory that is His ; pride is the source of all offences against Him and made devils of angels ; pride deprives us of the graces and merits God is so desirous to bestow on us, and if it does not altogether destroy our supernatural life, it at least exposes us to this grave danger. Have we not therefore good reason to crush out this vice from our hearts by applying ourselves seriously to the practice of humility ? There are many things we cannot imitate in the lives of the saints ; but we can all be humble and thus secure for ourselves the heavenly kingdom.

LXVIII. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

Blessed are the meek : for they shall possess the land (Matt. v. 4).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to imitate Him in the practice of this virtue of meekness.

1ST POINT.—Consider how earnestly Jesus desires us to practise meekness. “Learn of me,” He says, “because I am meek and humble of heart.” His whole life presents a most touching example of His meekness. Not only towards His friends and those who pleased Him, did He show Himself gentle but towards all; the poor, the ignorant and especially sinners were never treated harshly by Him. Nay, even those who continually persecuted Him, calumniated Him, loaded Him with outrages and who, He foresaw, would not rest satisfied till they had inflicted on Him a most cruel and shameful death, His meekness prompted Him to pity. Perhaps I have made but small endeavours hitherto to imitate the meekness of the Lamb of God. Do I break out in anger at the slightest provocation? Do I harbour bitter feelings, may be feelings of revenge in my heart? Do I conduct myself harshly and impatiently with the poor and ignorant? Let me humble myself before my Divine Master Whom as yet I so little resemble, and resolve to conquer myself.

2ND POINT.—Consider the reward promised to the meek: they shall possess the land, *viz.*, the land of the living, heaven. Is not this reward worth the cost the acquisition of this virtue will demand? I must therefore watch over my feelings and my words so that no sign of impatience, anger or harshness, in word or action, may escape me towards those that annoy or offend me. I must practise meekness and gentleness towards all.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this virtue is especially necessary to a priest. He has to represent Our Lord among mankind. He has to become all things to all men in order to gain all to Christ. He must draw to God the hearts of the poor and the ignorant, of children as well as of sinners. But how will he achieve this purpose of his life, if he does not avoid all signs of impatience, harshness and anger, and show himself kind and gentle towards all?

LXIX. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted
(*Matt. v. 5*).

Ask Our Lord to teach you to realise the value of the cross, and to help you to take it up with courage and love.

1ST POINT. Consider what a contrast there is between the teaching of Jesus, and the teaching of the world. The world recommends pleasure, self-satisfaction, enjoyment, ease and comfort, while it bends every effort on avoiding the least pain or suffering. On the contrary, Our Lord inculcates the advantages of suffering; He teaches us to regard it as a boon because it prepares us for heaven. Through suffering, our souls are purified, our hearts are detached from the things of earth, and we amass treasures in heaven. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John xvi. 20) is the utterance of Eternal Truth. Do I fully realise that in bearing the cross of suffering and humiliation I can experience true joy? Rather do I become impatient and discouraged under its burden? Let me endeavour to undeceive myself and to look on the cross as a source of joy and consolation. What a delight it is at the hour of death for those who have lived in its shadow!

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus chose the cross for Himself, and shared it with His Mother and the saints—His dearest friends. We must therefore regard the cross as a priceless gift since it is the reward Our Lord selects for those who love Him most. His esteem of it is thus made plain to us. This the saints fully realised, and hence they accepted trial and affliction from God not only with resignation but with thankfulness and joy. Behold how Our Lord's promise has been fulfilled in them: their transitory sufferings have been changed into everlasting joys. Endeavour to imitate them by regarding trial as a divine favour, and like them you will submit cheerfully to the cross.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this beatitude may apply also to those who grieve for their sins. They are deeply afflicted for having offended so good a Benefactor, and they spend their lives in making reparation for the injury they have caused Him. God values these tears of repentance and promises such souls that their sorrow will be turned into joy. Pray then for this true spirit of compunction which is the outcome of a sincere love of God. Such compunction is not accompanied with trouble or anxiety but rather begets great confidence in God's mercy.

LXX. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice : for they shall have their fill (Matt. v. 6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to stir up within your heart a true and effective desire of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider the meaning of these words of Jesus. They who hunger and thirst after justice are souls that have an ardent desire of acquiring all those virtues which can render them dear and acceptable to God. These souls are pronounced blessed. Do I belong to this class? To ascertain this I need only examine the efforts I make to correct my evil inclinations, to subdue my passions and to discard everything that opposes my progress in perfection. If these efforts to conquer myself are lacking, then I do not belong to that class pronounced blessed by Our Lord.

2ND POINT.—Consider how many reasons I have to hunger and thirst after perfection. Men seek with intense ardour the favour of the great ones of this world ; yet the favour of the King of kings is a far more deserving object of my ambition. Men hanker after vain honour, wealth and power ; yet the greatest honour I can conceive is to be admitted into close friendship with God, and the greatest riches I can desire are those heavenly treasures which endure for ever. It is in accordance with my progress in virtue that I shall acquire greater favour with God, and become more deserving of His gifts. Reflect how it is incumbent on those whose lives are dedicated to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, to strive earnestly after holiness and perfection. It is only in this way that they can render themselves fit instruments in the hands of God.

3RD POINT.—Consider what courage I should derive from the promise of Our Lord to those who hunger and thirst after justice. If a king were to propose these conditions to a beggar—"Make earnest efforts to become rich, and I will give you all you wish for,"—would not the beggar be filled with gratitude at such generosity? Would he not courageously and joyfully face every difficulty in order to comply with such a proposal? Now, such is the proposal Jesus makes to me. If I am earnest and sincere in desiring to become a saint, He will satisfy my desire. St. John Berchmans said, "I will

become a saint," and with God's help became one. Many others likewise, as weak as myself, earnestly resolved to acquire perfection and they obtained what they were hungering and thirsting for. Let me not forget that vain desires are without result.

LXXI. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. v. 7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand the necessity of this virtue and to aid you in its practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider how merciful God has been to you, and how greatly you were in need of His mercy. When He might have justly punished you for your offences against Him, He not only pardoned you under the easiest conditions, but even continued to protect you and load you with benefits. You are still in need of His mercy. What would be your fate if God claimed strict satisfaction for all that is wrong in your thoughts, words and actions, if He were not infinitely patient with your defects, your shortcomings and your sins? Being therefore so dependent on God's mercy, you should neglect no means of securing it. According to the words of the beatitude you must be merciful towards others, if you would secure God's mercy. Avoid then harsh judgments on the defects of others ; never speak of their drawbacks ; readily pardon whatever wrong you may have to suffer from their hands. In acting thus you will show mercy towards others, and God will, in accordance with His promise, show mercy towards you.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the practice of mercy will win for us the love of God, and a munificent reward hereafter. Our Lord has said, " whatever you do to the least of mine, you do also to me." If a king were to offer a rich reward for the smallest service rendered to the least of his subjects, there is no one who would not eagerly comply with the condition. If moreover he promised to regard these services as if personally rendered to himself, all would avail themselves of this easy means of winning his favour. But there is only one king who treats his subjects in this way, and that is Christ

Our Lord. Gladly then should we seize every opportunity of exercising mercy towards others. Each act will have its reward and will increase in us the love of God.

. 3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord will regard any want of mercy He observes in us. From His teaching we see clearly that He will look on our harsh judgments, uncharitableness, and perhaps severity towards others as marks of unkindness towards Himself. Our brethren are the beloved children of Jesus Who desires them to be treated as we would treat Him. Hence we should conceive a holy fear of incurring His displeasure in this matter. Examine your manner of conduct towards others, and see if there is not room for amendment.

LXXII. BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART

Blessed are the clean of heart : for they shall see God (Matt. v. 8).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of purity of heart.

1ST POINT.—Consider what Our Lord promises to those who are pure of heart,—they shall see God. Even in this life Our Lord delights to dwell in the heart that is free from all stain of sin, and to make Himself better known to it. But besides this He promises such souls the vision of God in heaven. No happiness can compare with this for it so absorbs in God the faculties of the Blessed that it becomes impossible for them to turn away from Him. Their joy is so pure and so intense that all other joys become despicable in their eyes. I should then make generous efforts towards the acquisition of such a blessing. Shall I allow the passing, vile satisfaction that sin offers to prevent me from attaining it ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the means we must adopt in order to acquire this purity of heart. If we have sinned, we must endeavour to efface every stain that is left in our souls. Thus by prayer and the use of the sacraments, by the practice of penance and humble submission to our daily cross, we may recover what we have lost through sin. If our hearts are led away from God by evil inclinations or unworthy attachments,

we should spare no effort in subduing those tendencies. Venial sin must not be considered a matter of small consequence, and the motives which help us to avoid it should be kept constantly in view. In fine, a close union with God and the remembrance of His presence will be our guard in every trial and temptation. Examine what use you have been making of these means in order to acquire purity of heart. Remember that if you seriously and earnestly desire the end, viz., to see God and enjoy Him for ever,—you will doubtless make use of the means, and particularly of that means which will be more effective in overcoming your predominant defect.

LXXIII. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. v. 9).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen in your heart the firm resolve of practising fraternal charity in all its perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great dignity it is to be called a child of God. The infinitely great and bounteous Lord of all deigns to regard and love me as His child. If I prove myself His deserving child, then He promises me a mansion in heaven where I may dwell with Him for ever in endless bliss. Am I worthy of such an honour? and yet, how small are the efforts I make to acquire this gratuitous favour!

2ND POINT.—Consider who are those peacemakers who, Our Lord tells us, will be called the children of God. Such are they who allow no feelings of anger, aversion, or revenge to dwell in their hearts, who never by word or action cause unnecessary pain to others, who yield rather than claim their rights in order to avoid any sign of quarrel or dissension, who cheerfully make any sacrifice which duty allows in order to preserve peace or restore it. Does my usual manner of acting prove me to be a child of God? If not, generously resolve to sacrifice yourself for the sake of peace, and thus deserve this blessing God promises for doing so.

3RD POINT.—Consider how ardently Our Lord desires us to exercise this office of peacemaker. He says to His Apostles:—"A new commandment I give unto you: that you

love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Elsewhere we learn from the inspired word, "if any man says: I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" Thus peacemakers show their love of God by observing Christ's precept of charity, and in this way respond to His most ardent wish.

LXXIV. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake : Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven (Matt. v. 10-12).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to suffer generously for His sake.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of the cross. We learn from God's inspired word that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, and Our Lord reminds us that the disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. Hitherto perhaps your sufferings have been light ; it may be that the ridicule, criticism or scorn, evoked by your attention to your duty, has been the greatest pain you have had to undergo. If Our Lord gives you but this light share of His cross, it is a reason for you to accept it bravely, and far from its causing you to neglect your duty, it should make you rejoice that you are found worthy to suffer even a little for the name of Jesus.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus calls those blessed who suffer for His sake because their reward is great in heaven. It was this thought that stimulated the courage of the martyrs in the endurance of their sufferings : with joy they often faced their torturers, and with feelings of regret were they at times deprived of what they so ardently desired. As brethren of these heroic saints, we should be ashamed of ourselves, were we not able to stand the smallest annoyance or humiliation

which the performance of our duty may involve. In humility let us ask God's grace to be mindful of His promise and to be courageous in supporting our daily crosses.

3RD POINT.—Consider how a form of persecution we must often undergo arises from the assaults of Satan. Seeing our sincere desire of serving God, the devil tries to shake our courage and perseverance by vain fear and temptation. In such trials we should remember the words of Scripture, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12). Moreover temptation can effect no harm in those who are humble and have recourse to prayer, because God is their protection. Resolve then to struggle with courage and constancy, and the victory no less than the reward attached to it will be yours.

LXXV. YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men (Matt. v. 13).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand better what He expects of you, and to help you to respond in a worthy manner to the trust He places in you.

1ST POINT.—Consider the meaning of these words Jesus addresses to His Apostles:—You are the salt of the earth. As salt is used to preserve food from corruption and to give it a savour, so your words and example must preserve men from the corruption of sin, and must lead them to the practice of those virtues that will render them agreeable to God. These words apply to you in a peculiar manner as you are chosen to continue the work of the Apostles. Thus you see clearly what God expects of you, and what you must do in order to become a fit instrument in His hands. If you do not conceive a horror of sin, how can you influence others to turn away from it? If you do not practise virtue, how can you lead others to its practice?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words:—If the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? Terrible are the consequences implied in these words for the priest whose heart

has become indifferent to sin and grown cold in God's love. The salt has lost its savour ; he has lost his fervour, neglected innumerable graces, and has nothing left in him wherewith he may fulfil the mission entrusted to him by God. Instead of his helping to stem the tide of sin and corruption in the world, he is carried along with it. Void of zeal for God's glory, his life of tepidity is valueless in the eyes of God. St. John Chrysostom tells us that one saint is enough to bring thousands to God, but if that saint loses his fervour, a thousand saints are not enough to give it back to him. Therefore a priest, more than all others, should fear tepidity in God's service.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words :—It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men. Herein is expressed the punishment that must inevitably follow negligence in the service of God. To be cast out and to become an object of abhorrence in the eyes of all good men is a terrible chastisement. Hence a priest, following the injunction of Our Lord to watch and pray, should make constant supplication to God to escape such a condemnation.

LXXVI. YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. v. 14-16).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand better what He expects of you, and to help you to respond in a worthy manner to the trust He places in you.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord shows His Apostles by another example what He expects of them. By this image He desires to imprint deeply in their hearts the importance of their functions so that they may ever be mindful of it. In no less degree does the lesson apply to priests on whose holiness the salvation or eternal loss of so many souls depends. It has been said with truth that a priest never goes alone either to heaven or hell. How these considerations should stimulate me to increase in fervour !

2ND POINT.—Consider the meaning Our Lord attaches to these words: You are the light of the world. In other terms, I have chosen you to guide others on the way to heaven both by your teaching and your example. But how will you be a light to others, if you allow your light to be extinguished, if you fail to keep alive the flame of divine love that should burn constantly in your heart? You must therefore feed it by the devout celebration of Mass, by frequent and fervent prayer, and by earnest meditation on those truths that tend to excite your fervour in God's service. The light that is dimmed by smoke is of little use. Since then you must set a good example to others, you must take care lest the good that should be perceived in your life do not become obscured by your defects. Thus it sometimes happens that a priest, owing to some defect that he has failed to correct, estranges souls from him. It may be through his anger, sloth or negligence that these souls are lost to God. The light that burns constantly, not in a flickering manner, is the ardent, steady zeal and fervour to be observed in a priest who is intent on being all that Our Lord wishes him to be. I have here matter for serious reflection when I view the responsibilities of my vocation under this aspect.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus:—Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, etc. In like manner God does not bestow on us His special graces to be hidden and lie useless, but rather to shine forth in us through a truly virtuous life and thus induce others by our example to render glory to Him. His praise and glory must be our chief and sole aim, and this we shall procure by showing forth God's work in the virtue and holiness of our lives.

LXXVII. FIDELITY IN THE LEAST THINGS

For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled. He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v. 18-19).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your desire of fulfilling even in the smallest things the most holy and adorable will of God.

1ST POINT.—Consider how careful we should be in avoiding even the slightest venial sin. For, although different from mortal sin not only in degree but also in kind, nevertheless, apart from mortal sin, it is the greatest of all evils. While loving us so tenderly and deserving in return all honour and praise, God is thus treated by us with ingratitude. Such an offence, if frequent and deliberate, becomes an obstacle to the abundance of God's grace and, predisposing the soul to mortal sin, deserves severe punishment from God. Recall your frequent acts of ingratitude towards so good a Father, the innumerable graces you have forfeited as well as the punishment you might have deservedly incurred for your neglect. Repent of the past and resolve to be careful in avoiding such a great evil.

2ND POINT.—Consider what immense treasures we can store up for ourselves in heaven by fidelity in our smallest actions. Many occasions thus arise for the practice of virtue ; every thought that tends towards God, every act that His love inspires will become a fount of new holiness and eternal reward. We must not count upon occasions which call for the practice of heroic virtue ; they are rare, and we cannot assure ourselves that we shall avail ourselves of them even should they come within our reach. Not even the smallest action can be deemed trifling which is sanctioned by the will of God. What a joy will one day be ours if, in accordance with this counsel, we neglect no practice of virtue that arises in the execution of our daily duties !

3RD POINT.—Consider what a marked difference of reward will be found in the soul that has been faithful in small things, and in one that is characterized by negligence. The former is daily increasing in merit, the latter is in the same degree void of this increase. Now compare their respective gain in the spiritual life throughout a period of time—a month, a year etc., and reflect on what treasures will have accrued to the one, and what incalculable loss will have befallen the other. One shall be called great, the other shall be called the least, in the kingdom of heaven. These words express the verdict of Christ Himself, Truth Infallible. Resolve therefore to perform your smallest actions with the utmost care and attention.

LXXVIII. THE HYPOCRISY OF THE PHARISEES

For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt v. 20). Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them : otherwise you shall not have reward of your Father who is in heaven (Matt. vi. 1).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you the great need of a pure and right intention in your actions.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Scribes and Pharisees gave all their attention to the external appearance of sanctity, and none to the internal purity of their hearts. For this Our Lord condemned them, and bade His Apostles beware of them. What advantage can we derive from the favourable opinion of men if our lives do not merit God's approval? We can hide nothing from Him; His all-seeing eye penetrates our heart and He will one day pronounce judgment on us in accordance with the perfect knowledge He has of each of us. All our efforts should therefore tend to render ourselves more pleasing in His sight by removing from our hearts the dross of impure motives of conduct, and by adorning them with the virtues He has a right to expect in them. How sadly we should be deceiving ourselves, did we rest satisfied with the approval of our superiors and brethren without caring to secure God's approval.

2ND POINT.—Consider the second warning of Our Lord:—"Take heed that you do not your justice before men" etc. While we seek for the esteem and praise of men, we cannot seek for the glory of God. That vain and useless object we may possibly succeed in attaining; but in the meantime we deprive ourselves of the true sterling merit attached to the only object worth striving for, *viz.*, God's glory. Many occasions occur each day of our lives for acts of virtue which are known to none save God. In the readiness you observe in yourself to perform such acts of virtue in preference to those which come under external notice, you may test your purity of intention. Resolve to correct your deficiencies in this important matter lest you should incur the penalty of being undeserving of a reward from your Heavenly Father.

LXXIX. NEVER CHERISH ILL-FEELING AGAINST OTHERS

If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee ; leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother : and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift. Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes whilst thou art in the way with him : lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge...and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing... And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell (Matt. v. 23-29).

Humbly ask Our Lord to impress deeply on your heart these holy lessons, and to aid you in practising them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great importance we must attach to these words of Our Lord ; it is the utterance of God Himself. Those who cherish feelings of, hatred and aversion towards their neighbour repel God from them. Their offerings and their sacrifices are not acceptable to Him till charity is restored. God's judgment will be strict on those who are unforgiving. He will make them render an account even to the last farthing. Without mercy He will claim the full payment of their debts. Every sinful thought, word, action or omission will receive its full retribution. How deplorable would be our condition if God so treated us ! Let us then show mercy if we would obtain mercy.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus :—" And if thy right eye scandalize thee," etc. Thus He teaches us that whatever may become for us an occasion of sin must be cast off, even though it were as dear to us as our right eye. It is better therefore to renounce such vain satisfactions as may expose us to sin than by indulging in them risk our eternal salvation. Let us examine ourselves and see whether any inordinate attachment or affection or undue pleasure in some temporal advantage is not hampering our spiritual life, and is not a cause of offence towards God. Resolve generously to strike at the root of any such evil affection, and thus clear the way for the free intercourse of your soul with God.

LXXX. RENDER GOOD FOR EVIL

But I say to you : Love your enemies : do good to them that hate you : and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you : that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have ? Do not even the publicans this ?... Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. v. 44-48).

Humbly ask Our Lord to impress deeply on your heart these holy lessons and to strengthen your purpose of practising them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the motive which Our Lord gives us for the practice of this virtue He is inculcating, *viz.*, because God is Our Father. And if we deem it an honour to be the children of a Father so holy and so good, it is our duty to try and render ourselves His worthy children. To resemble Him should be our greatest glory. Notice how God deals with those who through sin have become abominable in His sight. Though they rebel against His infinite Majesty and ungratefully abuse of His gifts, yet He treats them with patience and kindness. Unceasingly He watches over them, supplies them with their needs, and tries to win them back to repentance. What offence committed against us can compare with the offence sin is against God ? Can we call God Our Father if we are unwilling to render good for evil ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how perfectly Jesus has carried these counsels into practice. As Christians, we should show forth in our lives the example He has set us. As priests, we are His representatives with men, and therefore we should truly represent Him. Let us then remember how He prayed for His cruel executioners at the moment they were nailing Him to the cross, and how He excused them for their ignorance. Whenever therefore feelings of anger or revenge arise within our hearts let us recall to ourselves this striking example of Our Master.

3RD POINT.—Consider what advantages we may derive from the pain or wrongs that others may inflict on us. If we accept them in a Christ-like spirit, we can acquire for ourselves

great merits in heaven by this practice of virtue. In this way those who injure us do more harm to themselves than to us by their want of charity. We should then according to the example of Our Lord and His saints pity and pray for them rather than condemn them.

LXXXI. JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY

And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men . . . But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret : and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them : for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask him (Matt. vi. 5-8).

Ask Our Lord to teach you how to pray, and to give you a greater esteem and love for prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great privilege God confers on us by allowing us to pray. Though we are nothing but weak and sinful creatures, yet God condescends to admit us to an audience with Himself. Infinite in wisdom, majesty and holiness, He does not disdain to hold converse with us. Nay, He seeks our familiarity, desiring us to regard Him more as our loving Father than as our sovereign Lord. Aware of our needs He places His infinite power at our disposal. Do we rightly appreciate this privilege ?

2ND POINT.—Consider what are the dispositions Our Lord desires to behold in us when we approach God in prayer. Before all, our intention must be upright. We must give Him the honour, love and gratitude which we owe Him, and sincerely implore His assistance. If our intention is merely to display piety, and thus to win the esteem and admiration of those around us, our prayer becomes an abomination in His sight.

Again our prayer should be accompanied with great confidence and humility. By prayer we not only dispose God to yield to our petitions but rather render ourselves fit to

receive His favours. Hence it is not the choice language nor the multitude of words that renders a prayer fruitful, but the deep humility and boundless confidence with which we cast ourselves at the feet of God. Aridity and distraction in prayer should not therefore discourage us, for they tend to foster in our souls a humble disposition and to make us cry out with confidence, "Father, have pity on me!" Such a humble appeal of confidence God will not pass by unconcerned.

Do I foster these dispositions in my prayer? In my prayer am I fully conscious of my absolute dependence on God, and at the same time confident in God's readiness to help me in all my undertakings?

LXXXII. THE PRAYER:—OUR FATHER

Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven (Matt. vi. 9).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know better your Heavenly Father and to increase your reverence and love towards Him.

1ST POINT. Consider the greatness of the Father we have in heaven. The whole universe is in His hands; everything moves at His will; nothing can move without Him, nothing can resist Him. He controls life and death. His power and greatness is proclaimed throughout all creation. All earthly power is but a shadow of God's infinite sway. And this Great God has made you His child, bids you address Him as Father. What an honour, and how this dignity of child of God raises you altogether above your own nature. Surely it is preferable to lose all than to renounce this most glorious title. Hence in all your thoughts, words and actions you should make it a point of honour to comport yourself as a true child of God.

2ND POINT.—Consider the infinite goodness of the Father you have in heaven. So great and numerous are the benefits you have received from Him that you can neither count them nor realise their true value. Whatever you possess you have received from Him. After having conferred on you the

benefit of life, He ceaselessly guarded and watched over you, directed all the circumstances of your life for your greater good. Never did He withdraw from you His protecting arm. What a happiness to have such a Father, so wise, so good, so full of love for His children—a Father who knows all your needs, your trials and temptations, and who is ever ready to help you ! All these considerations should rouse within your heart sentiments of the most profound gratitude as well as of the most unbounded confidence and joy.

3RD POINT.—Consider the infinite perfection and holiness of your Father Who is in heaven—a holiness and perfection He desires to see reflected in the souls of His children. He is therefore pleased at every little act of virtue you perform out of regard for Him. Incessant toil at your perfection is but His due. To resemble your Heavenly Father is besides the only worthy object in life, for in this your real greatness lies. Endeavour then to reflect God's holiness and perfection in your life, and repent of having done so little hitherto in order to deserve to be called God's child.

LXXXIII. THE PRAYER :—OUR FATHER

Imagine you are present with the group of the Apostles on the mount listening to Our Lord teaching them how to pray.

Ask Our Lord to increase in your heart your esteem for fraternal charity.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus teaches each one of us to address God, not as My Father, but as Our Father. He wishes us to keep before our minds that all men are children of a common Father and that therefore each one should regard the rest of mankind as his brethren. We have a divine precept, to love them as ourselves. Just as we can wish no evil to ourselves, so should we wish no evil to our neighbour, even though he may have been a cause of suffering or offence towards us. We should compassionate him in his afflictions, rejoice with him in his success, assist him in his needs. Our judgments on his deficiencies should be tempered with mercy, his relapses patiently condoned. Treat others as you would wish them to treat you. Further, you can undertake no

sublimar work of charity than to devote yourself to your neighbour's spiritual needs. To withdraw their souls from sin, to enkindle in them the love of virtue, to raise their hearts towards God is not only to be a brother towards them but to be a father. Such a perfect exercise of charity is what God earnestly desires of us.

2ND POINT.—Consider how all men, even the lowest and the poorest, are entitled to honour and respect as the children of God, their common Father. In the light of this truth, we can deem no one beneath our consideration; we must not treat anyone, no matter how mean his condition, with scorn or derision. Hence our words should never betray harsh feelings towards anyone even in his absence.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the fact that all men are God's children should make me carefully avoid anything that might scandalize them and thus cause their love for their Heavenly Father to decrease. Therefore I must watch my conduct lest it might become an occasion of sin for others. This duty is especially incumbent on a priest, whose example, if not upright, may avert the hearts of God's children from Him. There is no father who would not feel grieved, did he discover one of his children trying to estrange his other children from him, or causing them to decrease in their love and respect for him.

LXXXIV. THE LORD'S PRAYER

Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven (Matt. vi. 9).

The composition of place is the same as in the preceding meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to detach your thoughts and desires from the things of earth and to fix them on the things of heaven.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the words:—Our Father who art in heaven,—remind us of the infinite majesty, holiness, beauty and goodness of God. Our Father reigns in heaven in

all the glory of His infinite majesty. Thousands and thousands of angels and saints worship and serve Him with unspeakable joy. He is the fountain head of all beauty. This universe with all its beauty is but a faint reflexion of God's infinite beauty, wherein consists the joy and rapture of the saints. So wonderful is God's goodness that it fills with ineffable joy the whole heavenly host of angels and saints, and so absorbs and captivates their faculties that they can never be separated from Him. Ask God to impress this thought on your mind, *viz.*, what am I in presence of His Infinite Majesty? Yet I dare to refuse to execute what I know to be His will. I offend Him before whom devils tremble, and from Whose all-seeing gaze I can never escape. I allow creatures to withdraw my heart from this incomparable Beauty and Goodness. Repent of your offences against a Father so good, so great and so holy, and implore Him to bind your heart for ever to Himself.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the words :—Our Father who art in heaven—remind us that we have here in this life no lasting city ; our only true abode is with Our Father in heaven. Great is the happiness He is preparing for us ; the everlasting glory and joy He has in store for us is beyond our comprehension. With courage therefore should we face the difficulties of the journey. There is no effort too great, no sacrifice too severe in the service of so good a Father Whom to serve is to reign.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this thought of our future inheritance should detach our hearts from the vain things of this world. "How vile the earth appears to me," exclaimed St. Ignatius, "when I turn my gaze towards heaven!" Would the son of a wealthy king stoop to pick up a few coppers he may see lying on the ground? Should I, the child of God, the child of the Supreme Lord of heaven and earth so abase myself as to attach my heart to the vile and perishable goods and pleasures of this world?

LXXXV. HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Imagine you are present at the scene in which Our Lord is teaching His Apostles how to pray.

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire to glorify Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus reminds us by these words, *Hallowed be thy name*, that our greatest desire should be to see God known, loved and served by ourselves as well as by all mankind. To know God is the greatest boon we can conceive. It is this knowledge together, with His possession that constitutes the beatitude of the saints in heaven. While still on earth it was this same knowledge of God that flooded the saints with joy in the midst of their tribulations; it gave them light to despise the things of this world no less than strength to endure the trials they encountered. If then I truly love my own interests as well as the interests of the souls of my brethren, I shall endeavour to acquire and to spread this divine knowledge. Pray fervently to obtain from God this precious grace.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the motive of gratitude should move us with an ardent desire of seeing God better known, loved and glorified by all mankind. We are the work of His hands; each of our lives is but a long chain of favours conferred by Him. It would be supreme ingratitude on the part of man not to recognise or aspire to know the Giver of all gifts. It is only meet that such a supreme Benefactor should be known, loved and served by all. To see Him ignored, offended and treated with ingratitude should fill us with grief.

3RD POINT.—Consider how God's infinite perfection is the noblest motive that can urge us to see Him better known and glorified. His boundless beauty, holiness, goodness, mercy and wisdom is reflected throughout His whole creation. It was this reflexion of God in His creatures that set the hearts of the saints aglow with His love, and inflamed them with an ardent desire of knowing Him better and of seeing Him more loved and glorified by all. You should therefore endeavour to conceive such sentiments in your heart as influenced the lives and actions of the saints. Let God's infinite perfection be ever present to your mind, and resolve to do all you can to spread abroad this heavenly knowledge.

LXXXVI. THY KINGDOM COME

Imagine you are present at the scene in which Our Lord is teaching His Apostles how to pray.

Humbly ask Our Lord to instil into your heart an ardent desire of giving yourself entirely to Him.

1ST POINT.—By these words, Thy Kingdom come, we pray that God may reign in our hearts, *viz.*, that our thoughts, words, actions and desires may be in perfect accordance with His most adorable will. In this way we submit ourselves to Him as to our Ruler, than Whom we can have no better or wiser or more loving. We shall find no one more ready to reward our services and more liberal in supplying all our needs. Thus, apart from the justice of such submission, we have immense advantages to gain by it. Our most fervent prayers should therefore be directed towards this end—to establish God's kingdom in our hearts by the complete surrender of ourselves to Him, the sole Ruler of our being.

2ND POINT.—Consider how by these words Jesus teaches us to pray that His kingdom in this world, His Church, may spread abroad and extend over all nations her beneficial influence. If our love for Our Lord is sincere, we must love the Church He has founded on earth in order to perpetuate His work and teaching. Just as He takes a deep practical interest in her growth and prosperity, so should our interest evince itself in contributing as far as we can towards her development. We can thus promote her welfare not only by our zealous undertaking for the good of others, but also by our prayers and the sanctity of our lives.

3RD POINT.—By these words, Thy Kingdom come, we pray that we may one day be numbered among the saints in glory. Our thoughts and desires should aspire towards this everlasting peace and joy. If we could better realise the happiness of the saints in God's holy presence, we would ardently long for the coming of that day when we too shall receive our crown of reward. The remembrance of that eternal joy should prevent us from exposing ourselves to the smallest danger of losing it. Let us often think of heaven, and thus excite in our hearts these holy aspirations.

LXXXVII. THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Imagine you behold Our Lord teaching His Apostles.

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to esteem and love God's holy will in all things.

1ST POINT.—Consider how we can desire nothing better than the holy will of God. No one loves us more than He, nor is there anyone more desirous of doing us good. His wisdom too can make every circumstance of our lives issue to our advantage. Never therefore should we be troubled by the dispensations of God's divine will. Whatever be the cross or trial to which we must submit, let us do so not only humbly but even joyfully. In this manner did the saints act ; we can see from the accounts of their lives that every circumstance helped them to advance towards perfection. Let us imitate their wisdom.

2ND POINT.—Consider God's infinite greatness and our insignificance before Him and our entire dependence on Him. If men are so anxious to execute with the utmost exactitude the orders and even the slightest wishes of their earthly sovereigns, how much more ought every expression of God's will, every command, whether it proceeds directly from Himself or indirectly through the Church or our superiors, be held sacred in our eyes ? We should not deem the least transgression against that will a matter of small importance. He who regulates all the actions of his life in accordance with this principle cannot but possess true peace and happiness. God is generous in rewarding such fidelity.

3RD POINT.—Consider how God's great liberality towards us should impel us from a sense of duty and gratitude to love His divine will in all things. He has bestowed on us not only the strict necessities of life, but He has given us innumerable sources of lawful pleasure and enjoyment. Since God has been so lavish in His bounties, we should wish that we were able to sacrifice to Him in return all that He has given us. Alas, instead of satisfying His least desire, we are prone even to expose ourselves to the danger of grievously offending Him. Far from deeming it a pleasure to seize every opportunity of manifesting our gratitude towards Him, we reluctantly submit to whatever sacrifice is not a direct call of duty. Perhaps such negligence creeps into our duties that they become but a poor token of gratitude towards so great a benefactor. Resolve to be attentive in all your actions out of gratitude towards God Whose will ordains each of them.

LXXXVIII. THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Imagine you are beholding Jesus as He is instructing His Apostles.

Ask Our Lord to instil into your soul a deep reverence for His holy will, and to help you to fulfil it in all things.

1ST POINT.—Consider with what great perfection the angels and saints fulfil God's will. Seeing God face to face they fully realise His infinite majesty and their entire dependence on Him. They know that His orders are prompted by His infinite wisdom and holiness, and therefore they joyfully and diligently execute them. We cannot see God as they do; yet reason and faith can sufficiently enlighten us to know His greatness and our absolute dependence on Him, to dread any carelessness in serving so great a Master. Nevertheless, do we not too often forget that the all-seeing eye of God is everywhere and always upon us? And are not our duties at times so negligently performed that we should feel ashamed if our superiors were observing us?

2ND POINT.—Consider with what love, joy and fervour the angels and saints fulfil the holy will of God. Their knowledge of God's perfection makes them clearly understand that He alone is worthy of all their love. The innumerable benefits He has bestowed on them makes them realise the greatness of God's love for them. Hence they show their gratitude towards Him by fulfilling His will with joy and alacrity. Although we do not see God, yet serious reflection on what faith teaches us concerning the gifts He has endowed us with, should awaken all our love and gratitude, and urge us to serve Him with the utmost joy and fervour. As priests, who know these truths of faith better than others, we should in consequence acquit ourselves of our duties with the joy and alacrity of the saints and angels.

3RD POINT.—Consider the exactitude with which the angels and saints fulfil God's will in Heaven. They are executing that will at all times, in everything even in the smallest details. This is their first and supreme duty; nothing can interfere with it; all else sinks to insignificance before it. Let us reflect within ourselves and see if we are mindful of our duty in this regard. We shall find perhaps that our pleasure, our ease or comfort only too often interferes with duties which we know God's will is claiming before all. Regret the past and resolve to do better.

LXXXIX. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Imagine you behold Jesus teaching His Apostles.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a deep gratitude for all the temporal favours He has designed to bestow on you.

1ST POINT.—Consider how by these words Our Lord teaches us to be mindful of God's bounteous hand supplying for us all our needs each day of our life. Whatever we have and whatever we require it is from Him we must obtain it. From the first moment of your existence God has thus been providing you with all your temporal necessities. You were present in His thought from all eternity, and He has prepared for you all these benefits you daily receive from Him. Surely such a good and loving Father deserves thanks; and yet, we often enjoy His gifts without even a thought of gratitude towards the Giver. Resolve to receive God's daily gifts in a spirit of thanks.

2ND POINT.—Consider what favours you have received and still daily receive from God, and how many others are deprived of such favours. God has provided abundantly for all your needs both temporal and spiritual. You need entertain no care or anxiety for your daily food and clothing. Nevertheless God was under no obligation whatever towards you in thus providing for your needs, for even those who live in poverty cannot deem themselves to have been unjustly dealt with by Providence. They indeed may have been more deserving of such gratuitous bounty than you. Instead of accepting all God's gifts in a spirit of humble gratitude, do you not at times show uneasiness and displeasure when anything does not exactly accord with your desire? Is this a becoming attitude towards such a great and generous Benefactor?

3RD POINT.—Consider how all God's gifts are bestowed on us for the one end, viz., to help us to know, love and serve Him better. It would be therefore a mark of base ingratitude to use those gifts for any purpose not intended by God. Yet, do we not use those very gifts to offend Him? By the right use of God's gifts we keep ourselves on the path of salvation; by an inordinate use of them we not only cause detriment to

our souls but even expose them to eternal loss. Hence it is foolishness as well as ungratefulness on our part to show neglect in adhering to the order established by Divine Providence. If we examine into our lives we shall probably find that we have much to repent of in this matter. Let us therefore resolve through motives of love and gratitude towards so great a Benefactor to be attentive in cultivating a pure intention in the use of those heavenly gifts.

XC. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Represent to yourself Jesus teaching His disciples to pray. ♦

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire for that spiritual food which is the source and strength of your spiritual life.

1ST POINT.—Consider how by this petition of the Lord's prayer Jesus teaches us to pray not only for the necessities of our body but also of our soul. If we desire to keep our body in health and vigour, we must give it its required nourishment; in like manner, if we wish to sustain the supernatural life of the soul, we must supply it with that spiritual nourishment which can only be procured by earnest and fervent prayer. We should evince greater solicitude towards maintaining the health of our soul than that of our body. The state of our soul at the moment of death will fix our condition for eternity. Hence let no disease attack it; but if it should, apply the most efficacious medicine of prayer.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the word of God is another source of nourishment for the soul. Just as the saints were most desirous of hearing heavenly doctrine and imbuing their minds with it so should we try to imitate them in conceiving similar sentiments in regard of God's word. Like them, we shall derive from this practice strength in our trials, consolation in our sorrows, fortitude in resisting the allurements of sin and the vain attractions of the world, a great love of God which will spur us on to do great things for His glory. This peculiar heavenly food can only nourish those who earnestly and eagerly desire it. But we cannot desire or hunger for it, unless we pray for this grace, and show ourselves active in imbuing

our hearts and minds with heavenly truths, and by serious meditation assimilating them. It is only by listening to God's word in this way that we may hope to derive from it spiritual nourishment for our souls.

3RD POINT.—Consider how it is the grace of God that constitutes the spiritual life of the soul. This heavenly gift renders the soul beautiful, holy and virtuous, and gives it strength to undertake and energy to accomplish great achievements for the honour and glory of God. Grace is as necessary for the soul as food is for the body, and if we do not strive to increase it in our soul the soul's life will languish and sin may threaten its death. We should therefore often reflect on this divine gift of grace and thus create in ourselves an earnest longing to grow in it daily.

XCI. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

The first prelude is the same as in the preceding meditation. Humbly ask Our Lord to create in your heart an ardent desire of the Holy Eucharist.

1ST POINT.—Consider how in this petition of the Lord's prayer, Jesus teaches us to desire and pray for Holy Communion. "This," He says, "is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John vi. 50-51). When we reflect on the effects this heavenly food will work in our soul we cannot but be inflamed with an ardent desire of partaking of it. In this Sacrament we are closely united to the Almighty Who will clothe us with strength from on high. Infinite Holiness and Wisdom condescends to dwell in our hearts in order to communicate to us something of these divine attributes. In this Sacrament our spiritual life is renewed, our soul is flooded with peace and joy, and divine love is enkindled in our heart. Our gratitude for being allowed to attend so frequently—even daily—this heavenly banquet should know no limit.

2ND POINT.—Consider that, though the essential disposition of sanctifying grace secures for us all those aforesaid effects, yet the more perfect the dispositions are with which we

approach holy Communion, the greater will be our share in these sacramental effects. A diligent preparation therefore for the reception of the Holy Eucharist is not only a duty of gratitude towards Our Lord but at the same time a means of making great progress in holiness. Let us then resolve to imitate the saints who attributed such wonderful effects to the fervent reception of Holy Communion, and who accordingly were most diligent in bringing to the reception of the Sacrament the most perfect dispositions.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the most nutritious food is of no avail for those whose diseased condition prevents them from assimilating it. In like manner, our inordinate affections, sinful attachments and tepidity in God's service are diseases of the soul which prevent the Sacrament of holy Communion from working its full effect in it. Let us then resolve to be generous in removing these obstacles in order not to deprive ourselves of the wonderful effects which attend the fervent reception of the Holy Eucharist.

XCII. FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US

Imagine you behold Jesus teaching His disciples to pray.

Humbly ask Our Lord to impart to you a spirit of deep mercy towards others.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great debt you ask God to remit when you implore His pardon for your faults. If you have ever committed a mortal sin, you have rebelled against His Infinite Majesty—you, an insignificant creature, have dared to rise against your Creator, you have handed back your soul into the power of Satan though it had cost Christ's most Sacred Blood to ransom it. You have desecrated in your heart the temple of the Holy Ghost. You have dishonoured God by preferring some vile pleasure to Him. And perhaps you have acted thus not only once but repeatedly, and as often did God graciously pardon you. Besides, how frequently you have offended God by venial sins, disregarding His commandments and indifferent to His love! How could you

ever hope to pay such debts? If God were not infinitely merciful towards you what would be your fate? You ask then very much indeed when you ask Him to pardon you. Are the conditions that He imposes on you for obtaining His mercy too severe in the light of your conduct towards Him?

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord in bequeathing to us this beautiful prayer inserted this petition in order to impress on us the necessity of forgiving others, if we wish to be forgiven ourselves. Compare the offences, that are committed against us with those which we have committed against God. The former indeed are small when we fix our attention on the latter. In either case, reflect on the person offended. On the one hand, God infinite in Majesty, holiness and wisdom; on the other, a poor insignificant creature deserving only contempt from all. Again, reflect on the nature and gravity of the offence committed against God and on the spirit of rebellion and ingratitude accompanying it,—a creature that owes all that it has to God refuses to obey Him. The gravest offence that others may inflict on us presents no point of comparison with the offence offered to God by sin. Nevertheless, on our readiness to forgive others their offences against us depends God's readiness to forgive us our offences against Himself. Let us act wisely by showing mercy in order to obtain mercy.

3RD POINT.—Consider how those that offend us are truly our benefactors. They place within our hands a sure means of obtaining God's mercy. Whilst they are doing harm to themselves, they are conferring a great favour on us. The saints rightly comprehended this truth, and in consequence they ever showed love for their enemies, pitied them and prayed for them. Imitate their example.

XCIII.—LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

See Jesus teaching His disciples to pray.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to be ever watchful and to have frequent recourse to prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus teaches us in these words to pray either to escape the trial of temptation or to protect us from succumbing to it. God may at times allow

temptation in order that we may realise our weakness, and that thus in a spirit of humility we may appeal to Him for help Who alone can give us victory. No temptation can overcome him who relies on the support of God's grace. Besides, our fidelity and love is thus put to the test, and our reward will be in proportion to the difficulty of our struggle. Hence if we are not guilty of rashness in exposing ourselves to the risk of temptation, we have nothing to fear from it. The Holy Spirit tells us:—Happy the man who suffers temptation, because when he has been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God has promised to those that love him. Let us then never yield to discouragement in temptation but struggle bravely with full confidence in God until we achieve victory.

2ND POINT.—Consider how in this petition Jesus warns us to have frequent recourse to God in prayer against the enemies of our soul—the devil and our evil passions. The dearer we become to God and the richer in His heavenly treasures, the more intense is the hatred of Satan against us. His experience in tempting mankind has made him skilful in his methods. He is fully acquainted with each one's predominant weakness and he makes this the ground of his attack. Any inordinate affection that we cherish, or any passion we leave unrestrained, at once supplies him with a means of effecting our ruin. But if God is with us his efforts are vain. Hence as this enemy is ceaseless in his efforts to ensnare us, we must be ceaseless in strengthening ourselves against him by seeking God's help in prayer.

3RD POINT.—Consider the necessity incumbent on us of being watchful over our thoughts our affections and our senses. It is true that God is always ready to help those who have recourse to Him, yet He insists on our taking at least ordinary precautions against the danger of temptation. As ministers of God we become the objects of greater hatred of Satan, and in consequence we must have stronger armour to resist more severe attacks. This special armour must be the mortification of our senses and the subjugation of our passions. By becoming priests we do not cast aside our human weakness nor can we claim immunity from sin. Reflect on the triumph of Satan and the dishonour to God when a priest falls a victim to his passions. Such a fall is deeper in him than in others. Hence we should examine our evil tendencies and guard against them.

XCIV. DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Represent to yourself Jesus teaching His disciples to pray.

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase in your heart the fear and horror of sin.

1ST POINT.—Consider how in these words Jesus teaches us to implore God's omnipotent help against the one supreme evil—sin. If we could realise what malice there is in sin, we would then understand why Our Lord recommends us to have continual recourse to God's protection against it. Beautiful indeed is a soul endowed with sanctifying grace. It is an object of God's special love. There is no treasure in this world that can compare with the riches and splendour of this treasure. Through this supernal gift we are raised to the dignity of children of God and made heirs to the kingdom of heaven—a dignity so sublime that it passes beyond our concept. From this consideration we can in some way understand the ruin wrought in the soul by mortal sin. In one moment all its heavenly beauty vanishes and it becomes like to the devils in hell. Robbed of its heavenly riches, deprived of its noble title of child of God and of its right to a divine inheritance, the soul becomes an object of horror in the eyes of God. It has plunged itself into a state of utter misery and degradation, and has rendered itself deserving of the eternal torments of hell. Can any evil be compared to this and have we not every reason to pray most frequently to be delivered from it?

Venial sin too must be regarded as a great evil. Though it does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, yet it makes it less dear to God and less deserving of His favours. Indulgence in venial sin exposes the soul to mortal sin, deprives it of many degrees of glory, and renders it liable to severe chastisements. Surely, these reasons should suffice to make us pray earnestly to be delivered from the evil of deliberate venial sin.

2ND POINT.—Consider how in this petition we may rightly pray God to be delivered from the many trials, sufferings and humiliations to which we are exposed. But such a prayer should be accompanied with perfect submission to God's holy will. He knows what will be of most advantage to us; and if He sends us trials and we accept them with true Christian

resignation, instead of evils they will become for us a source of great blessings. In this manner, we can clear the debts we have contracted with God, and by the practice of the virtues of patience and resignation attain to great purity of heart. Our reward will come in the next life, not in this. In all our trials therefore we should look forward to our eternal crown of glory, and always address our prayers to God in humble submission to His adorable will, never allowing ourselves to be influenced by feelings of impatience.

XCV. GATHER THE TREASURES OF HEAVEN NOT THOSE OF EARTH

Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth : where the rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven : where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matt vi. 19-20).

Humbly ask Our Lord to detach your heart from the things of earth, and to fix it on the things of heaven.

1ST POINT.—Consider how unworthy the things of earth are of the attachment of our hearts. Riches, the pleasures of the world, a great name, the esteem of men are incapable of satiating our longings. Often indeed our desire of attaining these things is frustrated, and even should the object of our desire be fulfilled, it is not unusual that it is attended with insecurity or an increase of anxiety. Again, when an ambition towards some earthly distinction is realised experience shows that new objects of ambition at once spring up. Feverishly striving for what they do not possess men fail to enjoy what they have. The attainment of the highest employments, of the esteem and honour of all men cannot satisfy the heart of man. He sees that he cannot rest in them, for death may in a moment separate him from all, and that the satisfaction he may derive from them can only be of an uncertain and brief duration.

2ND POINT.—Consider on the other hand that it is a sign of true wisdom to give our whole attention to the acquisition of heavenly treasures. While we aim at these, we know that

our efforts are not futile, for we have a surety in God's promises. By their attainment we gain true peace and joy such as the goods of earth cannot impart. We can experience no insecurity in the possession of heavenly goods, for no one can deprive us of them unless we freely reject them ourselves. Death separating us from the goods of earth puts us in full possession of the goods of heaven. Let us therefore imitate the example of the saints in following this wise counsel of our Divine Master.

3RD POINT.—Consider what means may be adopted in order to acquire those heavenly treasures. I have only to seek God's glory in the ordinary occupations of my life ; however insignificant they may chance to be in the eyes of men, they are great in the eyes of God, and may become for me a fruitful source of sanctification. I must therefore diligently exercise myself in referring the common actions of my daily life to God, and in seeking by them to execute His divine will. Accordingly if I seriously desire to become rich in God's treasures, I have but to employ this most direct means towards that end.

XCVI. PURITY OF INTENTION

The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness : the darkness itself how great shall it be ! (Matt. vi. 22-23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a strong resolution to aim at a greater purity of intention in your life.

1ST POINT.—Consider the meaning of these words of Our Lord :—The light of the body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, *i. e.*, sound, free from disease, thy whole body shall be lightsome. It is therefore important for us to keep the eye of our intention sound and pure, if we would advance safely in the path of perfection. We cannot perceive God's guiding light if our eye becomes dimmed or blinded by self-love. Hence we must direct our intention unswervingly towards the end of our creation. We are here to praise, reverence and serve God and by this means to attain to the happiness of

heaven. The attainment of this end ought to be the one and only intention in every thought or occupation of our life ; all else is of no importance.

2ND POINT.—Consider the many advantages that accrue to us from cherishing a great purity of intention. If we seek only to please God we shall secure His help in all our undertakings. He tells us to seek first the kingdom of heaven and the rest shall be added unto us. What perfect peace and security shall be ours ! for in whatever trying circumstances we may find ourselves, or whatever duties our superiors may impose upon us, our aim will be directed to the execution of God's holy will, than which nothing can be more to our advantage. Failure cannot trouble us since it is not success that will secure God's reward but rather the strenuous efforts we have made to please Him. What consolation such singleness of purpose will bring us, for we are conscious of serving a generous Master Who will not allow the smallest action done for Him to pass unrewarded ! In acting thus we follow the straight road to heaven.

3RD POINT.—Consider the second part of the warning of Our Lord :—If thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness, the darkness itself how great shall it be ! In other words, if you allow self-love, inordinate affections and passions to mar the simplicity and purity of your intentions, to blind you and prevent you from directing all your actions to God, you shall indeed walk in darkness, being exposed to the pitfalls and snares which the enemies of your soul prepare for you. If you abide in this darkness you run the risk of eternal ruin, and even should you escape this disaster, reflect on the disquiet and anxiety of mind together with the great loss of merit of your actions—evils which are but the natural sequel. When the moment of death approaches you will then see that to cherish any other aim in life except to serve God is but to pursue vain illusions. Resolve to act now as you will then desire to have acted.

XCVII. NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other : or he will sustain the one and despise the other (Matt. vi. 24).

Humbly ask Our Lord to withdraw your heart from all things that are in opposition to His holy service.

1ST POINT.—(Consider those words of Jesus :—You cannot serve two masters, *viz.*, two masters whose interests are opposed. Such are God and the devil ; Our Lord and the world ; virtue and vice ; the spirit and the flesh. Even if Our Lord Himself Who is Eternal Wisdom had not taught us this truth it is at once obvious to our reason. Therefore we deceive ourselves when we try to make a compromise between two such masters. We desire earnestly to practise virtue, but are not so earnest in forsaking what is opposed to it ; we wish to please God but do not wish to withdraw our heart from what we know is displeasing to Him. Such inconsistency is altogether incompatible with the true service of God. Let us therefore resolve to set ourselves free from the influence of any disorderly affection so that we may be able to serve God alone.

2ND POINT.—Consider what this service of God entails. Our Lord tells us that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. There is no service without labour ; but to labour and suffer for God is to experience what St. Paul calls a strange joy. This good Master, infinitely above His servants, loves them as His own children ; He takes charge of their interests, and in all their trials He is at hand to help, to console and to guide them. Whatever is done for Him—although He is in need of nothing—He treasures up in order to reward it. Those who trust in Him, shall never be deceived. Can I then desire a better Master ? And shall I hesitate in giving myself up unreservedly to His service ?

3RD POINT.—Consider on the other hand the master who wishes to withdraw us from the service of God. As God is goodness and truth itself so the devil is the personification of evil and deceit. He falsely allures us towards pleasure and self-satisfaction in order to secure our souls for eternity. The more we yield to him, the more do we become his slaves. If he flatters our pride, our self-love and sensuality by honours,

wealth or pleasure we should know that these are his snares ; if he makes our path smooth and easy, he will at the same time hide from us the eternal torment towards which it leads. Aware of his deceits shall I allow myself to be entrapped ?

XCVIII. CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on...Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap nor gather into barns : and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?...And for raiment why are you solicitous ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they labour not neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe : how much more you, O ye of little faith ? Be not solicitous therefore, saying, what shall we eat : or, what shall we drink : or, wherewith shall we be clothed?... For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things (Matt. vi. 25-32).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to have a boundless confidence in God's all merciful providence.

1ST POINT.—Consider how earnestly Our Lord bids us put our entire confidence in God. He desires us in this way to acknowledge His divine wisdom, goodness, mercy, and power. While on the contrary we distrust these divine perfections when we yield to diffidence or discouragement. How do you conduct yourself in this matter ? Do you try to realise the necessity of acting in accordance with Our Lord's injunction ? If you fail to place your full confidence in Him, you are lacking in the fulfilment of your duty towards Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider the examples drawn by Our Lord from the lower orders of creation. If God deigns to lavish such care and attention on the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, shall He not take care of me whom He has so loved as to lay down His life for me on a cross ? While I place myself and my spiritual interests confidently in His hands, and diligently employ the means He has given me,

no danger can assail me from without. Trust in God renders Satan powerless in his attempts to effect my ruin. Hence I should never lose courage in difficulties or in time of temptation, nor should I ever abandon myself to vain imaginary fears about the future. Besides, I should remember that by harbouring thoughts of diffidence I am displeasing God, Who desires to see in me an unbounded trust in His protection.

3RD POINT.—Consider how incomprehensible are the ways of God's providence, and from this learn to submit yourself with entire confidence to His guidance. As supreme Ruler of the universe, He orders each circumstance of our lives, and no evil can overtake us without His permission. With our weak and imperfect understanding we cannot fathom the deep counsels of God. Nevertheless we know that He is infinite in goodness, wisdom and power ; we know that He can draw good from evil, and therefore we are bound to do homage to His divine perfections by humble and limitless trust in Him. Try to conceive sentiments of gratitude towards and confidence in so good a Father.

XCIX. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice : and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. vi. 33).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you the necessity of seeking first and before all sanctity of life.

1ST POINT.—Consider the meaning of these words :—Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice. By these words Our Lord makes us understand that our first and supreme care must be to secure His reign within our hearts and thus to render up to Him all that His justice claims from us. In accordance with this counsel, therefore, our body with all its senses, our soul and all its faculties must be always kept in perfect submission to God, and the virtues we shall thereby practise will render us just in His eyes. Reflect on the titles Our Lord has to that perfect submission—as our Creator, our Redeemer and our supreme Benefactor ; and particularly, on account of our having freely assumed the livery of His service.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord recommends sanctity of life to be our chief care and solicitude in this world. On our efforts in this matter depends our eternity. How trifling all temporal concerns appear in the light of this important truth ! Moreover, if we, who are engaged in God's vineyard, do not want to see our labours barren and fruitless, sanctity of life must be our chief aim. It is an error of judgment, therefore, in a priest who under pretext of excessive labour becomes negligent in his spiritual life. To recite the divine office and celebrate Mass hurriedly and indevoutly, or to omit his daily meditation or examinations of conscience with a view to gaining time for exterior work is to deprive himself of that interior source which alone can give efficacy to his external labours.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words :—and the rest shall be added unto you. If your first aim is to attain holiness of life by the perfect fulfilment of God's holy will, He will then take care of all your needs, shower abundant blessings on all you may undertake for His glory. Do we not find most striking proofs of this truth in the lives of the saints ? They served God with all their heart, and God helped them through all their difficulties. Often, indeed, without any human resources they succeeded in accomplishing the most wonderful deeds. Let us imitate them in their strong conviction of this divine counsel.

C. ON CHARITY IN OUR JUDGMENTS AND ACTIONS

Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged : and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye ; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye ? Or how sayest thou to thy brother : Let me cast the mote out of thy eye ; and behold a beam is in thy own eye ? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye : and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matt. vii. 1-5).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to be always charitable in your judgments, and to see first to the correction of your own defects.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus:—Judge not that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. To pass judgment on the actions of man is the prerogative of God. His all-seeing eye penetrates the deepest recesses of man's heart, and He knows every circumstance accompanying each action. As man's sovereign Lord and Master, He alone has the right of condemning or acquitting. Nevertheless, I constitute myself the judge of my brethren and thus arrogate a right that exclusively belongs to God. My inability of knowing the intentions and other circumstances accompanying the actions of others should make me refrain from passing judgment on others. Moreover God will demand a strict account of my every action, and my only hope for mercy is to show mercy:—*Si iniquitates observaveris Domine, Domine quis sustinebit ? Have I not reason to tremble at this thought ?*

2ND POINT.—Consider the words:—Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own, etc. Easily indeed do we discover faults in others, condemn them in our hearts and speak of them,—perhaps, under pretext of correcting them. In the meantime, we are altogether blind to the fact that we ourselves have much more serious defects which call for correction. We would have others perfect but prefer to remain unmindful of our own deficiencies. Yet Our Lord warns those who conduct themselves in this manner of a like rigorous treatment. Let us reflect that it is for our own faults alone that we shall have to render an account, and that in consequence it is foolish for us to concern ourselves with the defects of others. What peace and consolation shall one day be ours, if our main purpose during life has been to know and correct ourselves !

CL. CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and you shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you...If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children : how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ? (Matt. vii. 7, 11).

Humbly beseech Our Lord to inspire you with great confidence in prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great need we have of God's help both for ourselves and for the successful accomplishment of the work He has committed to our charge. If left to ourselves, we find that we are utterly unable to resist the enemies of our soul. The onslaughts of Satan, the allurements of our senses and the world tend to enthrall us. Difficulties and trials easily discourage and overwhelm us. Our efforts towards perfection are at best but feeble. God alone can give us the strength and light, the courage and consolation, necessary for this constant combat. Again, in the work God has committed to us, no matter how great our personal efforts may be, we cannot insure its success without the assistance of God's grace. Seeing then our entire dependence on God, ought we not be filled with joy and confidence at hearing from the divine lips of the Saviour : Ask and you shall receive ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words :—Ask and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you. These are the words of Jesus whose promises must be fulfilled. Wonderful indeed is the efficacy of prayer ; it is truly the key to the treasures of God. By means of prayer these heavenly treasures are placed at our disposal. Without them we must necessarily become weak and languid in God's service, and we shall not effectively resist the assaults of temptation. Let us then diligently employ this powerful and infallible means of prayer in order to secure for ourselves God's treasures.

3RD POINT.—Consider how we must pray with perseverance. At times we are not granted what we ask, and often our petitions are granted only after a long and considerable delay. God knows what will be of advantage to us as well as the time suitable for acceding to our petitions. His love for us makes Him refrain from giving us anything that might prove detrimental to our higher interests. God may likewise be slow in answering our petitions in order to increase our merits, to make us practise and acquire more virtue, or perhaps to make us realise and value more highly the gift He is withholding for a time. Again, it may be that we lack reverence, humility or confidence in our prayer. We may be unwilling to submit to God's divine will, or we may be wanting in generosity in regard of some sacrifice which we are fully aware He is demanding of us, or perhaps our negligence and tepidity renders us unworthy of His favours. Nevertheless, we should ever keep in mind that we never pray in vain, that our prayers

are always heard even though we cannot perceive any result. If after examining ourselves we find that our defects prove an obstacle to our prayer, let us resolve to persevere in its exercise in order to overcome ourselves.

CII. ON THE NARROW WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE

Enter ye in at the narrow gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction : and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life : and few there are that find it (Matt. vii. 13-14).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a generous resolve of overcoming yourself in order to follow Him faithfully.

1ST POINT.—Consider what is the narrow gate by which Jesus wishes you to enter and the strait path He wishes you to follow. It is the gate and path of humility, obedience, self-restraint and mortification. It is narrow, but on this path the soul is secure from danger. Those who enter it must keep a diligent and constant watch over themselves. Nevertheless they are not without consolation for they possess a peace and joy of soul which the world fails to comprehend. They know that they are on the way to eternal life, that their present efforts and sacrifices will soon meet with an ample reward. It would be therefore dangerous and unwise for us not to give ear to the warning of our Divine Master.

2ND POINT.—Consider what Jesus understands by the broad path against which He warns us. It is the path of self-indulgence. Those who avoid all self-restraint and yield to the cravings of sense and passion, are pursuing this way of destruction. It is broad, because they who follow it do not keep before their minds God's commandments and counsels, and in consequence are deprived of all safeguard against sin and temptation. Can the pleasure of a short-lived liberty be balanced against the awful slavery of Satan and the eternal remorse that must ensue? Besides, even in this world such people cannot claim true happiness, for they become the sport of their senses, and cannot taste that sweet internal peace which God imparts to those who serve Him faithfully.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words :—Narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it. Few, indeed, compared with the multitude that follow the broad way of pride and sensuality. Yet, we have the example of thousands of saints who have freely chosen the narrow path. They had the same nature with the same passions, weaknesses and temptations to overcome as we. If they have been able to come off victorious, why not we? They now enjoy the fruit of their conquest due to their courage in pursuing the path pointed out to them by Our Lord. Shall we not imitate them in order to have a share in their happiness hereafter?

CIII. BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them (Matt. vii. 15-16).

Humbly pray Our Lord to set you on your guard against the wiles and snares of the enemies of your soul.

1ST POINT.—Consider how these words of Jesus, although primarily referring to heretical teachers, may be applied to the manifold allurements of the senses that constantly tend to withdraw us from the service of God. They indeed are false prophets that come to us in the clothing of sheep; they flatter our self-love, they present to our imagination the pleasures of self-satisfaction. It is only after we have been deceived and have reached the brink of eternal perdition that we come to realise the true character of these sense allurements—as ravening wolves. We should, therefore, seriously take into account this warning of Our Lord.

2ND POINT.—Consider how these false prophets may also signify the false pretexts and maxims of the world which openly cast obloquy on the counsels of religion. Such are the expressions we at times hear, “The Saints may do so. Why put ourselves in strait-jackets for nothing? We must not scent evil in every natural propensity. We shall tighten the reins later on, if necessary.” Rightly should we guard against such utterances which tend to blind our spiritual vision. If we give ear to them, however slightly, we shall at once

slacken in watchfulness, prayer and self-denial, and thus expose ourselves to utter spiritual ruin. Flattering our pride and sensuality they approach us in the garments of sheep, viz., with the specious reasonings on which such maxims are based.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord :—By their fruits you shall know them. To understand these words you have only to review the lives of those who have pandered to their senses and adhered to the maxims of the world. Have they in this way attained to any degree of real happiness? Have their pleasures satisfied them? Has their pride won for them peace of heart and mind? On the contrary, the more they have submitted to the cravings of sense and to the inordinate longings of ambition, the greater difficulty have they found in appeasing these lusts. Sin follows sin, and they are estranged from God. Even religious may become tainted by the false maxims referred to, and show their fruit in ceasing to strive after perfection, indulging in tepidity and sloth, and rendering themselves unfit as instruments for God's work among men. Earnestly pray that you may never become a victim of these false principles.

CIV. THE HOUSE BUILT ON A ROCK

Everyone therefore that heareth these my words and doth them shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew : and they beat upon that house. And it fell not, for it was founded on a rock. And everyone, that heareth these my words and doth them not shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew : and they beat upon that house. And it fell : and great was the fall thereof (Matt. vii. 24-27).

Humbly ask Jesus to teach you to be truly wise in adhering strictly to His divine lessons.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great work we have undertaken at the moment we answered God's call to serve Him. It involves toil at our own perfection no less than toil at the salvation and perfection of others. This is the building we have to raise. God places at our disposal abundant material ;

we have but to make use of it. When we reflect on God's infinite goodness, on the debt of gratitude we owe Him, when we ponder over the grave issues at stake both in regard of ourselves and of so many others, we can well understand how strictly God may demand from us the execution of these responsibilities which we have freely assumed. We should therefore constantly remember that He expects to see thoroughness in all our duties.

2ND POINT.—Consider the grave pronouncement of Jesus :—Everyone that heareth these my words shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. Herein we learn how God's just expectations may be realised in us. It is by adhering to Christ's doctrines of self-denial and detachment from the things of sense, of continual watchfulness over ourselves by frequent and fervent prayer so as to restrain within due bounds our pride, passions and sensuality. In this manner we may hope to become true disciples of Our Saviour, we may repose secure against all the storms of trials and temptations, and we may be confident that whatever work God entrusts to us will attain success in His eyes.

3RD POINT.—Consider that if we should allow ourselves to run counter to these lessons of our Divine Master by the neglect of mortification, by ceasing to watch and pray, by indulgence in the pleasures of sense, then shall His words be truly verified in us :—"the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house. And it fell, and great was the fall thereof." Temptations and trials will arise and we shall succumb ; and great will be the ruin both for ourselves and for others.

OV. JESUS CURES THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

And the servant of a certain centurion who was dear to him, being sick, was ready to die. And when he had heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the ancients of the Jews, desiring him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying to him : He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him. For he loveth our nation ; and he hath built us a synagogue. And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent his friends to him, saying : Lord, trouble not thyself ; for I am not worthy

that thou shouldest enter under my roof. For which cause neither did I think myself worthy to come to thee : but say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers : and I say to one, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this and he doth it. Which Jesus hearing, marvelled : and turning about to the multitude that followed him, he said : Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel. And they who were sent, being returned to the house, found the servant whole who had been sick (Luke vii. 2-10).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your faith and humility.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the centurion sends the ancients of the Jews to intercede with Jesus for the cure of his servant. He did so because he thought their prayer would be more acceptable to Jesus and hence more efficacious than his own. These men readily acceded to his request, for the centurion had won them to his friendship by certain proofs of his regard for them. Not only did they use their influence but they pointed out to Our Lord the offices of piety and charity for which they had become indebted to the centurion. In like manner should we approach the saints and ask them to intercede for us. If by our devotion to them we have made them our friends, they too will point out to Jesus our good deeds and thus move Him to accord our request.

2ND POINT.—Consider the deep faith and humility of this man, although a pagan. While all the others are praising him, he is deeply impressed with a sense of his unworthiness to receive One, so great and holy as Our Lord. Nevertheless, his humility does not overcome his confidence, for he relies not on any merits of his own but rather on the boundless mercy of Jesus. Reflect on this beautiful example, and you will find much to imitate.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus is deeply moved by the lively faith accompanied by the most profound sentiments of humility in the centurion. He praises him aloud and grants at once his request. When I approach Our Lord in prayer, have I any reason to think that He rejoices in my humility and faith ? I should therefore earnestly endeavour to work these virtues into my life and especially into my prayer. Perhaps my prayer is languid because it is not accompanied with these virtues.

CVI. THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIM RESTORED TO LIFE

And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother : and she was a widow. And a great multitude of the city was with her. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her : Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And he said : Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. And there came a fear upon them all : and they glorified God, saying : A great prophet is risen up among us : and God hath visited his people (Luke vii. 12-16).

Humbly ask Our Lord to fix your heart on His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider this young man now a corpse and about to be interred. You will one day be in the same lifeless condition ; the world and all it has given you will then have ceased for you. Death visited this young man though perhaps he had been cherishing the hope of a long life. May not the same fate happen to you ? What will you value then in your life except what you have done for God ? Accordingly, if you are wise, you will spend all your endeavours in loving God and amassing treasures for heaven.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Heart of Jesus is moved with compassion at the sight of the widow's grief. Yet it is He who has allowed this misfortune to befall her : thus will God be glorified, and she believing in Jesus will abound with joy and consolation. In this scene Our Lord teaches us how we must regard our sorrows. God allows us to be afflicted for our good and His own glory, and He Himself full of compassion for us can in a moment flood our souls with a joy far surpassing the transitory trials we may be undergoing. Remember that He says to us, " Do not weep ; Do not grieve ; Be not disconsolate, for your sorrow will be turned into joy." Consoling indeed is this reflection for those who never swerve from their confidence in the love and mercy of Jesus. They will face with courage every difficulty that may confront them.

3RD POINT.—Consider the joy of the mother and her son so unexpectedly united together again. Surely their

hearts were filled with the tenderest feelings of gratitude towards their Divine Benefactor. Ever mindful of this great favour they never ceased to be intent on God's service and praise. Recall to mind the still greater benefit you have received from Our Lord; when sin had destroyed the life of your soul He restored it again to its supernatural life. Would it not be a mark of base ingratitude to forget this benefit or to expose yourself to its loss through any carelessness?

CVII. THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another? And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them (Matt. xi. 2-5).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire to devote yourself entirely to His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. John, even though in prison, is no less zealous for the glory of his Divine Master. He himself knew quite well who Jesus was; he had given testimony to Him in public. For the present he desired to see his disciples convinced by their own personal experience of the true Messianic character of Jesus. He accordingly sends them to Jesus as if on a mission of inquiry. Like St. John, they who truly love God find means of glorifying Him under every circumstance. If I should deem any circumstance of my life as an obstacle to God's service, I may be convinced that it is rather my feeble love of God which is the true obstacle. I should therefore earnestly pray for love so ardent that I may seek every opportunity of exercising my zeal.

2ND POINT.—Consider that it was St. John's intrepid zeal for God's glory that brought about his imprisonment. He was well aware that by rebuking Herod for his sinful life he would incur the king's anger, nay even be exposing his life. But in a matter in which God's glory was at stake, neither

suffering nor death could deter him. Cast into a dungeon he reckoned it a favour to be able to suffer for the Master he loved so dearly. What a grand example for a priest whose duties may often demand great sacrifices ! These indeed are generally rare, but little sacrifices are called for every day of our lives ; let us learn to embrace these latter readily after the example of St. John.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus answers the question proposed by the disciples of St. John. He appeals to the facts which are the fulfilment of what had been foretold about Him in Holy Scripture. In like manner if we have to give proofs to the world that we are truly the disciples of Christ, His true representatives, we can do so only by appealing to the facts of our lives. The practice of humility, detachment from the things of the senses, obedience and devoted charity especially towards the poor must be seen to characterize those who claim to tread in the footsteps of the Saviour. Pray then Our Lord to increase His love in your heart, to make it strong, generous and fruitful in virtues and good works.

CVIII. JESUS TESTIFIES TO JOHN'S HOLINESS

And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak to the multitudes concerning John. What went ye out into the desert to see ? A reed shaken with the wind ? But what went you out to see ? A man clothed in soft garments ? Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see ? A prophet ? Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written : Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee (Luke vii. 24-27).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen in your heart the practice of self denial.

1ST POINT. Consider how Our Lord praises the constancy and courage of St. John. He is not like the reed yielding to every gust of wind, but a man whom neither difficulty nor trial can cause to swerve from the fulfilment of his duty. While yet a child he resolved to live for God, and ever remained steadfast to his purpose. The hardships of a life of protracted mortification did not dishearten him. His humility

lost nothing of its lustre through the praise and admiration of the concourse of people that surrounded him. Fear of imprisonment and death did not deter him from insisting on God's law. Each day of his life he advanced with strides towards perfection; he made use of every circumstance of his life to increase in sanctity. In presence of such an example let us acknowledge our weakness and inconstancy. A trifling occurrence often hinders us from doing what we know to be pleasing to God.

2ND POINT.—Consider the Baptist's mortified life and detachment from the things of the world. This characteristic again evokes the praise of Our Lord Who contrasts his austere treatment of the body with those who clothe themselves with costly apparel and live delicately. John's life in the desert had no room for sensuality. It was this mortification and detachment that gave vigour to his discourses and aided him in accomplishing his mission. If we too desire to fulfil thoroughly the duties of our vocation, we cannot do so otherwise than by cultivating a spirit of detachment and self-denial. If we are void of these virtues, an excessive care of our health or a dread of hardships will be the chief determining factors of our lives.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord praises St. John for his having so diligently prepared the way for the Messiah. The work allotted him by God he accomplished with angelic perfection. John's sanctity, deep humility and perseverance in prayer rendered him a fit instrument in God's hands for the fulfilment of His designs. We likewise have been called to prepare the hearts of men for Our Lord. If we strive to fulfil that mission in accordance with the plans of Providence we shall merit the praise of Our Divine Master. Let us therefore resolve to copy the example of St. John.

CIX. MARY MAGDALEN ANOINTS THE FEET OF JESUS

One of the Pharisees desired him to eat with him. And he went into the house of the Pharisee and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And standing behind at his feet, she began to

wash his feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee, who had invited him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying : This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.—When Jesus had contrasted Simon's coldness with the love of Mary Magdalen He concluded :—Wherefore, I say to thee : Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And he said to her : Thy sins are forgiven thee...Thy faith hath made thee safe. Go in peace (Luke vii. 36-39, 47-50).

Humbly ask Our Lord to awaken in your heart a sincere repentance for your past sins. and a great confidence in His infinite mercy.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the lessons Mary Magdalen had heard from Jesus had laid bare to her eyes the wickedness and degradation of her life. Her sorrow was heartfelt and sincere, and her resolve to give up a life of sin was firm. She was fully aware of the contempt and scorn with which the Pharisees would treat her. Though they indeed may spurn her she knows that Jesus will receive her with kindness and mercy. Doubtless she had heard Him say that He had come into the world to save sinners. From Him therefore she sought pardon with confidence. If I shudder at the judgments of God, let me recall the boundless mercy of my Saviour and seek pardon in His Divine Heart so full of pity and love.

2ND POINT.—Consider Magdalen's humility. Regarding scorn and contempt as her due she faced the stinging rebukes of the Pharisees. She utters not a word, but silently her tears begin to flow. Only a short time ago proud and vain, she now stoops down to render to Jesus the office of a slave, and fain would she become still more abject. Behold what a grand example of true repentance. We too have good reason to lower ourselves before God and men ; and yet, are not all our endeavours spent in trying to elevate ourselves ?

3RD POINT.—Consider what a reward Magdalen receives for her humble and loving repentance. Not only does she obtain a complete pardon but the grace also of becoming a great saint. Our sins therefore should never discourage us, but rather our humble acknowledgment of them should lead us to an entire confidence in the infinite mercy of Jesus. The contrite and humble heart He will never repel.

CX. MAGDALEN PERSEVERES IN HER CONVERSION

Represent to yourself Mary Magdalen at the foot of the Cross.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to resolve firmly to undo your past sins by fervour and generosity in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the feelings of joy and gratitude with which the Magdalen's heart overflowed when she heard from the lips of Jesus the pronouncement of her pardon. A great load of sin was forthwith lifted from her heart. She was no longer enthralled beneath the power of Satan. She was now God's child and could lift her mind and heart to Him with confidence. With dread she recalled the consequences inevitable to a life of unrepented sin, and filled with gratitude for the boundless goodness of Jesus she resolved henceforth to live for Him alone. Such too should be your feelings, and such should be your resolve.

2ND POINT.—Consider the fidelity with which Mary Magdalen adhered to her resolution. During the mortal life of Jesus she listened with eagerness to His divine lessons, pondered them in her heart, and directed all her actions in accordance with them. Joyfully did she devote her services to Jesus and His Apostles. When through fear and shame the Apostles abandoned Jesus in His passion, Mary Magdalen wanted to have a share in all His sorrows and humiliations. Following Him to Calvary she stood beneath the Cross with Mary. Let us learn from this example steadfastness to our resolutions.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the regret of her past sinful life was ever present to the mind of Mary Magdalen. Although Our Lord had forgiven her, had conferred on her many favours, and had raised her to a high sanctity, yet she never ceased to be deeply conscious of the immense debt that had been remitted her, and of the obligations which such a gratuitous favour involved. She could never lower herself enough before God and men, nor could she ever make sufficient reparation for her past sinful life. These were the thoughts that controlled her years of penance, and impelled her to advance constantly in holiness. If, like Magdalen, we keep before our minds the remembrance of our past offences and Our Lord's mercy towards us, we shall always preserve in our hearts sentiments of humility and fervour.

CXI. THE HOLY WOMEN MINISTER TO THE WANTS OF JESUS

And it came to pass afterwards that he travelled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God : and the twelve with him : and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities : Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth, and Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward ; and Susanna and many others who ministered unto him of their substance (Luke viii. 1-3).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of showing Him your gratitude by placing yourself and all you possess at His disposal.

1ST POINT.—Consider the motive which impelled these women to minister from their substance to Our Lord and His Apostles. It was the outcome of their deep gratitude for the favours they had received from Him either in soul or body. We deem it as a matter of course that gratitude should be shown for favours, and wherever we notice ingratitude we naturally feel indignant. When however we reflect on our own lives and perceive the immense favours we are daily receiving from God, have we not reason to be even more than dissatisfied with ourselves for our deficiency on this point of gratitude ? When our duties involve trouble and fatigue, or some small sacrifice is demanded of us, we often not only show reluctance but even neglect or refuse what we know to be God's will. In acting thus we are manifestly ungrateful.

2ND POINT.—Consider the manner in which these holy women showed their gratitude to Jesus. They ministered to Him from their substance. They spared neither themselves nor their possessions in meeting the needs of Jesus and His Apostles. They rendered their services spontaneously and joyfully. To do something for Him Who had done so much for them was in their eyes a privilege they highly esteemed. If we really love Our Lord and are truly grateful to Him for the benefits He has so graciously bestowed on us, we shall not only execute with care the work He has allotted to us, but with joy and cheerfulness, deeming it a favour to be able to serve Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord was in no need of the ministrations of these holy women. Yet He permitted them to render Him service so as to give them the opportunity

of meriting a great reward. If we reflect on the relations in which we stand with Our Lord, shall we not find them to be altogether similar ? Has He any need whatever of our service ? Even though we should deliver up to Him our whole being and all we possess, we give Him nothing which we have not received from Him ; we alone are the gainers. Notwithstanding His absolute independence He yet deigns to accept our service and our love in order that we may reap the full reward He destines for us. Such gratuitous love claims generosity.

CXII. JESUS CASTS OUT A DEVIL FROM A MAN BLIND AND DUMB

Then was offered to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb : and he healed him, so that he spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said : Is not this the son of David ? But the Pharisees hearing it, said : This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils (Matt. xii. 22-24).

Humbly ask Our Lord to attach you to Himself more and more.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a cruel and relentless foe we have in Satan. He is ever bent on our downfall, and if he does not succeed in dragging us into sin, he will strive to afflict us in other ways. On the other hand, we see Jesus full of compassion for all human miseries and always ready to help and console us. Would it not be then utter foolishness, were we to turn aside from such a Friend, our God and Saviour, for the sake of some momentary satisfaction of our self-love and to give ourselves up to the sway of our bitterest enemy ? Nevertheless this is what we have done, if ever we have consented to a mortal sin. Deep then should be our repentance no less than our gratitude to Our Lord who rescued us from the dire consequences of our blind folly. Though perhaps this danger be now remote, yet we still expose ourselves to it whenever, neglecting the counsels of our Divine Master, we yield to the false maxims of the world or of Satan.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the devil without actually taking possession of the souls of men can render them spiritually blind and dumb. He blinds them to their own defects,

to the dangers of their soul, to the goodness, wisdom and power of God, to the inestimable value of the things of heaven. He makes them dumb by preventing them from being open and sincere towards their spiritual directors, by urging them to withdraw from converse with God in prayer, and by persuading them to keep silent when duty demands of them to speak. Do we not occasionally submit to his influence in some of these ways? Let us resolve firmly to avoid his deceits henceforth, and to take refuge with Our Lord who will undoubtedly help us.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Pharisees avail themselves of every opportunity in order to destroy the fame and repute of Our Lord. Notwithstanding their vile calumnies, Jesus does not rebut their accusations with anger, but calmly and patiently tries to dispel the blindness of their understanding. Nor do their calumnies withhold Our Lord from the exact fulfilment of His ministry. Altogether unconcerned at their hatred Jesus continues to do good to all around. In this way He teaches us how we should conduct ourselves in like circumstances.

CXIII. JESUS TEACHES US DETACHMENT FROM KINDRED

As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him : Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee. But he answering him that told him, said : Who is my mother and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said : Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt. xii. 46-50).

Humbly ask Our Lord to remove from your heart any inordinate attachment towards your parents and relatives.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the relatives of Jesus, possibly anxious about His personal safety, or at least desirous of procuring Him some repose from His oppressive labour, approached Him in company with Mary. Knowing how dear she was to Him, they hoped that her presence would influence Jesus in acquiescing in their desire. Their motive was not blameworthy,

for they saw that He was harassed day and night by multitudes. Nevertheless Jesus had to fulfil the ministry appointed Him by His Heavenly Father. No one, not even His Mother whom He loved so well, can stand between Him and the souls He had come to save. Accordingly He replied : Who is my mother and who are my brethren ? And stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said : Behold my mother and my brethren. Sublime indeed was this lesson of self-sacrifice which He then conveyed to His Apostles. He would soon send them forth throughout the world in order to continue His mission, and they would then have to renounce all those they held dearest. In no less a degree does the lesson apply to us. We belong to God and to the souls He has sent us to save. Hence we should not allow any love of kindred to interfere with this work or to cause us to acquit ourselves of it less perfectly. Reflect on your obligations towards Our Lord, and see whether you are guilty of any slackness owing to any such inordinate attachment.

2ND POINT.—Consider how intense is the love of Jesus for the souls of mankind, since for their sake He foregoes the pleasure of intercourse with His Mother than whom no one is dearer to Him on earth. The burning zeal of His Heart prompts Him to lavish on them His care, to instruct them, and to lead them in the path of salvation. Feeble then will be our excuse if, owing to our negligence, love of ease and comfort, any soul should be eternally lost. Since we are consecrated to God, let us resolve henceforth to live with the sole aim of accomplishing the work He has allotted us.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of the narrative :—stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said : Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven is my brother, and sister and mother. Thus fidelity to God's holy will in all things binds us to Jesus by the closest ties of affection. This assurance of earning the intimate love of our Saviour should impel us to fulfil perfectly and with ardour all the duties of our vocation.

OXIV. PARABLE OF THE SOWER (*1st Meditation*)

And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went up into a boat and sat : and all the multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying : Behold the sower went forth to sow. And whilst he soweth, some fell by the wayside ; and the birds of the air came and ate them up (Matt. xiii. 2-4).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with an ardent desire of being taught by Him and a strong purpose of practising His divine teaching.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the sower mentioned in this parable is Our Lord Himself who has come on earth to teach us the way to heaven. The seed is His example and the doctrine He handed down to us through His Apostles and their successors. Reflect on the rich and abundant harvest which Jesus has a right to expect from this seed of heavenly wisdom. He has sown this seed in our souls at the cost of great sacrifice to Himself. See what fruit it has brought forth in the souls of the saints, and compare its effects in your own soul. Hitherto perhaps the harvest has been poor, and may show few signs of being promising. Humble yourself before God, and renew your purpose of making your heart a fit receptacle for God's word so that it may produce in you abundant fruits of holiness.

2ND POINT. Consider that it is through our own fault, should God's word fail to produce in our souls an abundant harvest of virtue and of merit. We either receive it negligently, or not fostering it hamper its efficacy. For this we shall have to render an account to God. He will remind us that He has cared for our instruction, that with the same instruction others became saints. He will demand of us the harvest which He had a right to expect. Shall we then be able to excuse ourselves if our souls have proved barren soil to His word? Let us therefore examine ourselves, and see what it is that hinders us from deriving more adequate fruit from the divine lessons of Jesus.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord points out to us what may prevent the heavenly seed of His word from fructifying in our souls. "Some," He says, "fell by the wayside ; and the birds of the air came and ate it up." Under this image He describes thoughtless and careless souls. They

indeed hear the word of God, but inattentive to its importance, it never reaches their heart. The birds of the air come and eat it up, for their minds being occupied with trivial concerns they cannot take to heart the lessons they have heard. Can I say that I in no way belong to this class? If hitherto I have been slow and indifferent in the practice of Our Lord's teaching, if my mind and heart is wont to be absorbed altogether in trivial matters, doubtless the divine seed can have borne but little fruit in my soul.

CXV. PARABLE OF THE SOWER (*2nd Meditation*)

And other some fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth : and they sprung up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched : and because they had not root, they withered away (Matt. xiii. 5-6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to aid you to remove from your heart whatever hinders you from advancing in the way of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider who they are to whom Jesus refers in this part of the parable. He tells us that they are those who hear the word of God and immediately receive it with joy ; but when tribulation or difficulty arises, they at once grow faint, their feeble resolutions being without any solid foundation. Reflect on your own life, on the many good resolutions you have formed even with earnestness, and in spite of this, trifling difficulties have often induced you to neglect or disregard them. A passing uncharitable remark perhaps has caused you to overlook your determination of being patient, humble and meek. The dread of some small humiliation may have influenced you to regard as light an offence against truthfulness. Humbly acknowledge your weakness before God. Yet, do not allow this reflection to plunge you in discouragement, but rather let it lead you to examine the cause of your weakness and to have recourse to adequate means for acquiring spiritual vigour.

2ND POINT —Consider the reason given by Our Lord why the seed did not take root, and therefore withered away and was scorched under the heat of the sun. It was because the seed

had fallen on stony ground and had little earth to cover it. In like manner does the heart of man often prove a stony soil for the seed of God's word owing to some evil inclination, such as pride, sensuality, or fear of trouble. Men hear the word of God, form good resolutions ; but when an occasion of exercising their resolutions occurs, their evil propensity prevails. Being unwilling to remove the obstacle they prevent the seed from fructifying. I should therefore diligently examine myself in order to find out if there be such an obstacle in my soul. I should likewise convince myself that no harvest is possible until this stony ground is broken up and removed.

3RD POINT.—Consider the advantages that will accrue to me from generosity in this undertaking. I may dwell on its utility in view of my eternal reward, on the joy and peace that is certainly the outcome of a victory over myself, and on the necessity of faithfully adhering to the word of God for one who desires to minister it with fruit and success. Neglect in this matter will one day cause bitter but useless regret. While I have the time therefore let me resolve to conduct myself with generosity.

CXVI. PARABLE OF THE SOWER (*3rd Meditation*)

And others fell among thorns : and the thorns grew up and choked them (Matt. xiii. 7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to be generous in putting aside whatever impedes your progress in perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord explains these words of the parable:—He that received the seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word : and he becometh fruitless. Attachment to the goods, honours and pleasures of the world is the third obstacle pointed out by Jesus which will prevent His word from bearing fruit in my soul. If I do not put duty before enjoyment, if I attach my heart to money, if I endeavour to please men and to win their affection and esteem without any view towards God's glory ; any of these attachments will not only choke virtue in my soul but will render me unfit for the work to which God has so lovingly called me—the salvation of souls.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus likens these goods and pleasures of the world to thorns which wound us when we endeavour to grasp them. The thorns may be concealed beneath flowers but none the less exert their baneful effect. Many people in the world will bear witness to this sad experience. Where they hoped to discover happiness, they met with care, disappointment and not unfrequently affliction. Fortunate indeed are they who give ear to the warning of Divine Wisdom, and withdraw themselves from the alluring deceits of the world.

3RD POINT.—Consider the inestimable reward you will gain by sacrificing the esteem, pleasures and honours of the world in order to win souls for Our Lord. Instead of perishable riches you will possess eternal treasures of which you will never be deprived. Instead of the fleeting pleasures of earth which can never fully satiate the soul, you will enjoy the unalloyed delights of the angels and saints for which your soul was created. Instead of the empty glory of the world, the everlasting glory of paradise will be yours. These thoughts should stimulate you to generosity in the service of God.

CXVII. PARABLE OF THE SOWER (*4th Meditation*)

And others fell upon good ground : and they brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold (Matt. xiii. 8).

Humbly ask Our Lord to aid you to prepare your heart so that God's word may fructify in it.

1ST POINT.—Consider that the good ground means here ground well tilled or prepared. As any soil however poor may become fertile by cultivation, so our heart, whatever be its evil inclinations, can be made to bear abundant fruit. It may demand laborious and diligent cultivation, and if this be generously undertaken, the fruit is certain. Accordingly, for no reason should I relax the constant labour which the spiritual fruit of my soul demands. Daily I must renew my efforts to improve.

2ND POINT.—Consider what are the dispositions which will insure the fruit of God's word in my soul. I must approach God with an eager desire of learning from Him the science

of the saints, I must earnestly pray for it, because it is such a precious grace as God only bestows on those who esteem and eagerly desire it. I must approach my Maker with true humility, because He tells us that He resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble. I must purify my heart from all stain or attachment to sin, and destroy in it every evil tendency. These are the stones of which the field must be cleared, if it is intended to be rendered fertile. Finally I must ponder over God's word in my heart so as to imprint deeply on it His divine teaching. When the soil is cold seed cannot fructify, so neither can God's heavenly seed produce fruit in a heart void of generosity, shrinking from all sacrifice, and only ready to adhere to Our Lord's teaching in so far as it does not run counter to its desire of pleasure and comfort.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words :—and they brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold and some thirtyfold. When a husbandman beholds a beautiful and rich harvest spreading over the ground he has laboriously cultivated, he forgets what it has cost him, and rejoices in not having spared himself any toil that was necessary. If however he had been careless in tilling the soil, at the time of the harvest he sees his fields barren and fruitless ; he may regret but his regrets are futile owing to the opportunities of which he did not avail himself. If we desire to experience the joy of beholding a rich harvest at the close of our life, we must make diligent use of the time we have now at our disposal.

CXVIII. JESUS WARNS US TO KEEP IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

He that is not with me is against me : and he that gathereth not with me scattereth... Either make the tree good and its fruit good : or make the tree evil and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known (Matt. xii. 30, 33).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you well understand the lesson He conveyed in these words.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words : He that is not with me is against me. Justly indeed may Our Lord claim our service. As creatures we are bound to serve our Creator ; as outcasts

having been restored to God's friendship through the merits of our Redeemer, we belong to Him Who has paid the price of our redemption ; as priests we are His servants in a peculiar manner, having voluntarily consecrated our lives to Him. Whenever then we do not direct our actions to His service and glory, but strive after the vain glory of the world, its goods and its pleasures, we not only prove unfaithful servants but our actions are directly telling against His interests. In failing to satisfy His claims we are promoting the cause of His enemies. When we reflect on our lives we find reason enough for regret as well as for renewing our determination to serve Him alone henceforth.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words : He that gathereth not with me scattereth. Jesus has laboured and suffered and died on a cross to gather for us immense treasures and merits. But if we do not gather with Him, if we do not co-operate with the graces He has earned for us, we are scattering and squandering the riches of His treasures. Not following in His footsteps nor practising the virtues which His example has taught us, we deprive ourselves of the benefits He intended for us. By our sinful neglect in this manner we incur great spiritual loss. Had we been careful throughout our lives never to waste Our Lord's precious gifts, what a surpassing crown of glory we should have now secured for ourselves ! Let us resolve therefore to profit by His grace and by His example. His humility, charity, obedience and detachment from the world must become the guiding rule of our lives.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus : by the fruit the tree is known. In these words Jesus appealed to an obvious fact to which His enemies could not close their eyes. They could bear witness to His irreproachable life, to the sanctity and sublimity of His teaching, to His self-sacrificing labours. Such fruit could not be the outcome of anything false or counterfeit, and therefore claimed a more favourable judgment than they were inclined to form. By the same standard must we judge the value of our own lives, and it is by the same that God will judge us. When we reflect on what little fruit of good works we have hitherto produced, notwithstanding the many graces we have received, we have indeed small room for self-conceit. On the contrary, when we see what we have lost or vitiated by our pride and self-love, we can only humble ourselves before God.

OXIX. PARABLE OF THE COCKLE (*1st Meditation*)

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the goodman of the house coming said to him : Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field ? Whence then hath it cockle ? And he said to them : An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him : Wilt thou that we go and gather it up ? And he said : No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers : Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn (Matt. xiii. 24-30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you watchful over your heart and your senses.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the field referred to in this parable is the Church ; the wheat, those who live according to her teaching ; the cockle, those who live in sin. Although the Church has received from God and dispenses to all so many means of sanctification, yet she has within her fold many indifferent and bad christians. Our Lord gives us the explanation of this in the parable, in which he tells us that the devil was on the alert while men were asleep. These words ought to prove a salutary warning for those who have charge of souls, should they through love of ease and comfort neglect those souls, and thus give the devil an opportunity of bringing about their ruin.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the master does not allow his servants to uproot the cockle, but bids them wait till the harvest, when they shall gather the cockle into bundles to burn and gather the wheat into his barn. Thus does God show Himself patient with sinners and bad christians. He could hurl them into hell, but in His mercy He waits to see if they will yet return to Him and not choose to perish for ever. So too should we be patient with sinners in God's Church. If they fail to repent they will in time meet with the avenging hand of God ; yet, while there is hope of saving them let us never relent in our endeavours to win them back. What would have become of ourselves, had God not shown Himself patient and merciful towards us and given us time for repentance !

3RD POINT.—Consider the parable as applied to ourselves. In the field of our heart, in spite of all God's warnings and the perpetual outpouring of His grace, a great deal of cockle has sprung up—such as our many defects, and perhaps our sins. An enemy did this while we were asleep ; while we neglected to guard our senses, our thoughts and our affections, we gave the devil an opportunity of sowing the evil seed of temptation in our heart. God has been patient with us so far, but we must remember that the time of the harvest will come when all these faults—if they continue to develop in our heart—will become fuel, if not for the fire of hell, at least for purgatory. Let us therefore no longer continue to try God's patience but generously set about correcting our defects.

CXX. PARABLE OF THE COCKLE (*2nd Meditation*)

Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers : Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn (Matt. xiii. 30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a generous resolution to use well the graces He gives you.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord expounds to His disciples these words of the parable of the cockle :—"The cockle are the children of the wicked one. The harvest is the end of the world : and the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire ; so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send his angels : and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Remember that these are the words of Eternal Truth. The end of all illicit pleasures and sinful indulgence is eternal fire—a fire enkindled by the wrath of God which shall ceaselessly torment and yet not destroy its victims. There, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth : sinners will recall the graces they abused of, the time they lost, the opportunities they despised, God's ceaseless and patient warnings ; and their vain regrets and rage against themselves will serve but to augment their anguish. Heedless of God's mercy they continued their reckless life of sin ; and now, alas, too late ! all is lost, and for ever. If they could return to the world, how they would fly from sin !

2ND POINT.—Consider the explanation Our Lord gives of the words :—the wheat gather ye into my barn—“Then,” says He, “shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Eternal happiness far surpassing all the pleasures of the world shall be the reward of those short years spent in the generous love and service of God. The just will then rejoice at the efforts they made to keep their hearts pure by the mortification of their senses and affections. They will then clearly perceive how contemptible are the goods, pleasures and honours of the world when compared with the eternal possession of God. With God’s help I can secure this happiness.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord concludes this parable :—He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Let him hear while there is still time lest an hour come when it will be too late. Let him give ear to these solemn warnings of his God and Saviour, if he would escape tardy and bitter regrets. Applying these words to myself let me keep in mind that my salvation is in my own hands. God wishes to save me, but He will not do so without my co-operation.

CXXI. PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field. Which a man having found, hid it : and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field (Matt. xiii. 44).

Humbly ask Our Lord to stir up in your heart a great desire of perfection with a strong purpose of generously striving for it.

1ST POINT.—Consider the joy of this man on finding a treasure. Not yet in possession of it he determines to secure it, however great be his immediate sacrifice. He foresees the many advantages that will accrue to him, and the joyful prospect stimulates his efforts. Far greater reason have I to rejoice when I reflect on the treasure God has placed within my reach—a treasure as far surpassing the one this man sought for as heaven surpasses earth. This divine treasure is the grace of perfection by which I shall gain not only a few days of comfort and pleasure, but an eternity of happiness so great that I cannot even conceive it. How thankful I should be to God for such a favour, and how eagerly I should strive to obtain it !

2ND POINT.—Consider the precautions which this man takes lest anyone should rob him of the treasure he has found, or prevent him from acquiring it. In like manner I must be watchful lest I should lose the treasure God offers me ; for there are robbers closely observing me for an occasion to deprive me of it. Sin and inordinate affections, my passions, pride and self-love are the foes that can wrest from me what is of far greater value than all the treasures earth can give.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the man spoken of in the parable sold all his possessions in order to buy the field where the treasure was hidden. He had realised its value, and saw that it was worth the sacrifice of all he had. With alacrity then he faced a passing inconvenience, being well aware of the immense profits that would ensue afterwards. If we could well understand what a wonderful boon perfection is, what it is to be closely united to God, to share in His eternal happiness, we would deem no sacrifice too great to undergo in this life for its attainment.

CXXII. THE MERCHANT SEEKING PEARLS

(1st Meditation)

Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it (Matt. xiii. 45-46).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you an ardent desire of perfection, and to make you generous in pursuing it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how in the great work of our perfection, Our Lord proposes for our imitation the example of a merchant. To acquire wealth, a merchant bends all the faculties of his mind to the business he has in hand. But what is all the wealth of the world compared to the heavenly riches I can acquire by pleasing God in all things ! Therefore have I reason for exerting myself to the utmost in this great undertaking which is of far greater consequence than any worldly concern.

2ND POINT.—Consider how a merchant who is deeply interested in his business, is ever on the alert to increase his profits ; he is not satisfied with less when he can gain more. However great be the trouble he has to undergo, he pays no

attention to it, being wholly occupied with his pursuit. If, in like manner, our mind was intent on the pursuit of heavenly riches and on the acquisition of merit before God, we would soon reach a high sanctity. Though convinced of this truth, yet do we not foolishly let slip many occasions in which these heavenly treasures are offered to us? We shrink from the little extra trouble or annoyance which the perfect performance of our daily actions demands, and thus lose rewards of infinite worth.

3RD POINT.—Consider how carefully merchants avoid anything that might cause them loss: studiously they examine their accounts; they are on the watch to forestall any threatening danger. How different is our mode of action towards the surpassing riches of heaven! Through our pride, negligence or sloth we allow our daily actions to be spoilt of a great part of their merit. Innumerable are the losses we may incur in this manner. We are exposing our soul to its eternal ruin for which no earthly possession can in any way compensate. Hereafter our regrets will be bitter indeed, but of no avail. Let us while we have the time free ourselves from everything that tends to turn our minds away from the eternal goods of heaven.

CXXIII. THE MERCHANT SEEKING PEARLS

(2nd Meditation)

Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it (Matt xiii. 45-46).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great desire of advancing in perfection together with the spirit of generosity necessary for it.

1ST POINT.—Consider why Jesus compares perfection to a precious pearl. Pearls indeed are very beautiful, and men seek them in order to adorn themselves with them. Our Lord selects this object of comparison as being something which men esteem most highly. Virtue is the ornament of the soul which, when adorned with it, becomes an object of love in the eyes of God. By virtue the soul becomes worthy of enjoying hereafter the glory and happiness of heaven. We should therefore esteem it above all earthly treasures or beauty, and ardently desire to acquire it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the merchant went his way, and sold all he possessed in order to purchase the precious pearl he had discovered. The sacrifice he had to undergo for its acquisition was surely great, but this did not deter him because he foresaw that he would be amply recompensed. He went his way,—he at once executed his purpose lest he should lose such a valuable prize. Here I have an example of what my attitude should be towards the acquisition of the precious pearl of perfection. The time and means are now at my disposal ; am I sure that God will give them to me later on ? Procrastination is a habit fraught with the utmost danger. The sacrifice is demanded at once and without delay. It was in this manner that St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus, St. Francis Borgia and many others renounced their princely fortunes and the honours inherent to their condition in life. They realised the value of perfection, and adopted the most secure means for attaining it. I should therefore imitate their promptitude in renouncing whatever hinders me from attaining perfection.

3RD POINT.—Consider what a necessity it is for me to aim at the acquisition of this precious pearl of perfection. God has given me every facility. He demands of me no extraordinary actions. All that He claims is the perfect performance of my daily duties, and that I should take advantage of the many occasions He gives me in order to advance in piety, humility, obedience, confidence in God, and in charity towards Him, and towards my neighbour. To attain this end I must be generous in renouncing my personal desires and inclinations. Doubtless the prize well deserves the efforts its attainment involves.

CXXIV. THE PARABLE OF THE NET AND THE FISHES

Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea and gathering together of all kind of fishes. Which when it was filled they drew out : and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire (Matt. xiii. 47-50).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your resolve of remaining faithful to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words :—the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea and gathering together all kinds of fishes. The kingdom of heaven is the Church that gathers her members from all the nations of the world. Just as the net, however, which is thrown into the sea catches but a certain number of fishes and leaves many behind, so does the Church fail to gather all within her fold—not through any fault of hers but because many do not want to submit to her. If we are not now among that number, it is due to the bounteous grace of God. Without any merit of ours God deigned to gather us within His true fold, where we find so many and such efficacious means for securing our salvation. What would have been our condition, had God not been so merciful to us ? The recognition of this great benefit should no less fill our souls with gratitude towards our greatest Benefactor, but should likewise stimulate us to gather within His Church as many souls as we can.

2ND POINT.—Consider how fishes of every sort were caught in the net. Some indeed were good, others were bad. In like manner, the Church has some good members who live according to principles of faith, and some bad members whose conduct little accords with the faith they profess. There are other members too who are not entirely bad, but whose tepidity and negligence in God's service exposes them to become so. I should therefore examine myself and see to which of these classes I belong. There is only one class in which the security of my salvation can be found. Nevertheless, if I find myself becoming careless and tepid in God's service, I have no right to class myself among the good members. If such is my case, have I not reason to tremble seeing how I am exposed ? I should therefore pray fervently to escape from this evil of tepidity.

3RD POINT.—Consider what will be the final issue of all. When God will judge mankind there will be found only two classes, the good and the wicked. These latter, Our Lord tells us, the angels of God shall cast into a furnace of fire. What excruciating pain, what endless affliction and remorse will harrow their being for all eternity ! Remember that no one can say he is secure against such a misfortune ; yet, we can attain a certain degree of security by making serious efforts to lead fervent lives and by giving ourselves wholly to God. Let us renew our purpose of doing so.

CXXV. JESUS CROSSES THE LAKE OF GENESARETH WITH HIS APOSTLES

And it came to pass on a certain day that he went into a little ship with his disciples. And he said to them : Let us go over to the other side of the lake. And they launched forth (Luke viii 22).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a firm purpose to remain closely united to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this passage of the Apostles across the sea in a small boat bears resemblance to our life. At birth we began our passage through life ; not until death shall we land on the shore towards which we are borne. Our journey is fraught with peril, our bark is frail and may easily succumb to the roughness of the sea. As the Apostles drew their support from the presence of Jesus with them, so may we unite ourselves with Jesus and thus fearlessly confront the tempests that unceasingly threaten us. Dangerous reefs lie hidden in our path, but with Jesus as our Guide we shall be able to direct our bark with safety. He is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, and His love for us urges Him to exert His wisdom and His power on our behalf. We may launch forth therefore with full reliance on Jesus in whom we trust for guidance through each circumstance of our life. While we remain with Him and He with us, fear of peril is groundless.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a wretched fate overtakes many on this journey towards eternity because they have not Jesus with them. They do not know Him, or knowing Him they do not perceive the need of giving Him the helm of their boat. Remember that all those who are thus tossed about without help or guide are our brethren ; they are God's chosen creatures whom Jesus loves and wishes to save. We should therefore spend all our endeavours in making Jesus known to them, in bringing Him to them in order that they may reach in safety the eternal shore.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Apostles though they had Jesus with them were not thereby exempted from personal effort. They had to manage the sails and ply their oars with vigour. The journey was short, and they worked joyously,

happy to render this little service to their Divine Master. Thus although Jesus is with us and always ready to help and protect us, yet He wants to see us making personal efforts to advance on our journey towards heaven. For us too the journey is short, and the labour will be soon over. When we find it trying and monotonous, we should direct our thoughts towards the final goal where all pain and sorrow will end. Our actual labour and trials should be our joy, for we are thus able to prove our love for our Divine Master, and to repay Him in some degree for all He has done for us.

CXXVI. THE STORM ON THE SEA

And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves : but he was asleep (Matt. viii. 24).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to forestall temptation, and never to lose your peace of soul and confidence when subjected to it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Apostles began their journey with a sense of great security as Jesus was in their company ; in this they had judged aright. They likewise thought that the journey would prove prosperous from beginning to end over a perfectly smooth sea ; in this however they had erred. For His own reasons Our Lord allowed them to be overtaken by a violent storm. Perhaps we too, like the Apostles, have begun with great confidence in God's help both the labours of our sanctification as well as those of our ministry. We were right in our judgment, for God never fails those who trust in Him. Possibly however we looked forward to a career in which everything would proceed smoothly and without anxious moments. Nevertheless Our Lord, Who governs our lives, for reasons of His own permits us to be tossed about by temptations and trials. It is necessary for us to keep this in mind lest when storms break upon us, we might be exposed to lose that confidence with which we had so well begun, and be unprepared to withstand them.

2ND POINT.—Consider why Our Lord allowed the Apostles to be overtaken suddenly by this violent storm. They were all the while safe in His keeping for He would not have

allowed them to perish. Yet, He had to convey to them in a striking manner an important lesson by which they would come to realise their own powerlessness and His infinite power. Later on they would have to encounter severe trials, and now He must teach them how they should conduct themselves on such occasions. From this scene therefore they learn that they have not to rely on themselves, but that they have to place all their trust in His powerful and loving providence. When Our Lord permits temptations and trials to come upon us, let us recall that He is all the while ready to intervene on our behalf lest we should perish. Yet, He makes us experience our weakness in order to keep us in humility and to strengthen and increase our confidence in Him. He loves us, and He places His power at our disposal, which can save us and on which alone we must rely. Do we keep this thought in mind in time of temptation? Is this the lesson we learn from the trials God sends us?

CXXVII. JESUS STILLS THE STORM

And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves : but he was asleep. And they came to him and awaked him, saying : Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them : Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up he commanded the winds and the sea : and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying : What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him? (Matt. viii. 24-27).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a boundless confidence in His infinite power and mercy.

1ST POINT.—Consider how throughout the storm Jesus was asleep as if he had been unaware of the peril to which His Apostles were exposed. Nevertheless He knew what was happening and tenderly kept watch over them, intending to relieve them from their danger in due time. When we are assailed by temptation Jesus likewise watches over us. At times He may appear to sleep, and to abandon us as a prey to the storm raging in our heart, but He is ever by us, ready to support us when we cry to Him for aid.

2ND POINT.—Consider the terror of the Apostles in presence of the danger that was threatening them. Many indeed were the evidences they had had of Our Lord's power; they knew how sincerely He loved them; but they at once became oblivious of all this when disaster confronted them. They appealed to Him as if He was quite unconcerned with their plight: "Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?" (Mark iv. 38). Therefore Jesus rebuked them: "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" Thus we see how displeased Our Lord is when we fail to trust Him. Do we not often deserve to be reproached in the same terms as the Apostles? While we are determined never to abandon Him nor to offend Him by sin, He will never allow us to perish. We know His goodness and His power, and therefore we are unjust towards Him, if we let ourselves become despondent in trial.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord arises and commands the sea and the winds, and at once there ensues a great calm. Admire this wonderful power which He can exercise as easily on your behalf. However weak and helpless you may feel, however strong and violent be the assaults of your enemies, you have no reason to fear while you abide with Jesus. His strength will become your strength, and you may say with St. Paul, "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Consoling indeed is this reflection and one which should encourage us in the midst of our difficulties in our apostolic labours. We should likewise be convinced of the necessity of seeking all our strength in Him by a true spirit of prayer.

CXXVIII. THE POSSESSED MAN AT GERASA

And they came over the strait of the sea into the country of the Gerasens. And as he went out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the monuments a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs: and no man now could bind him, not even with chains...And he was always day and night in the monuments and in the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones. And seeing Jesus afar off, he ran and adored him. And crying with a loud voice, he said: What have I to do with thee, Jesus the Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not (Mark v. 1-7).

"And there was, not far from them, a herd of many swine feeding. And the devils besought him, saying : If thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine. And he said to them : Go. But they going out went into the swine : and behold the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea : and they perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled : and coming into the city, told everything and concerning them that had been possessed by the devils. And behold the whole city went out to meet Jesus : and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart from their coasts" (Matt. viii. 30-34).

"And when he went up into the ship, he that had been troubled with the devil began to beseech him that he might be with him. And he admitted him not.....And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him" (Mark v. 18-20).

Humbly ask Our Lord that He may strengthen in your heart the horror of sin.

1ST POINT.—Consider the wretched condition into which this possessed man had sunk. It is an image of the effect wrought on the soul through mortal sin. Created in the likeness of God and adorned with supernatural life, the soul through sin becomes like to Satan : like him, it rises in rebellion against God. Justice and gratitude bound it to the service of its Creator ; but neither the fear of hell nor the love of God nor the remembrance of His benefits could withhold it from evil. If I have ever committed mortal sin, this is the state of degradation into which I sank. How can I ever be sufficiently grateful to Jesus for having delivered me from such misery ! How cautious I should be not to expose myself to the danger of a relapse !

2ND POINT.—Consider the joy of this man thus delivered by Jesus. So grateful was he that he wanted to consecrate himself entirely to Our Lord's service. And though this request was refused by Our Lord, he nevertheless proclaimed His fame and His goodness throughout the whole country. Call to mind that by delivering you from sin Our Lord did much more for you than He did for this man ; for the devil was in possession of your soul, not of your body. Your gratitude should therefore be unbounded. Moreover Jesus has received you into His special service,—a privilege which deserves your highest esteem as also your most strenuous efforts to make Him known and loved by all.

CXXIX. THE GERASENS BESEECH JESUS TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY

The Gospel narrative is the same as in the previous meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord never to allow your heart to be turned aside from His service by the allurements of the world.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus gave leave to the devils to enter into the swine and to drown them. Probably this herd of swine was intended for sacrifice to idols. Accordingly by permitting their destruction Our Lord not only punished those who kept them, but removed what would obstruct their conversion. Thus at times does temporal loss befall us, or ill-success attend our favourite enterprises. Our Lord in this way severs our hearts from their earthly attachments which may endanger our eternal salvation as well as obstruct our progress in the way of perfection. We may feel intensely the wrench of our self-love ; yet, it is a mark of God's mercy towards us, and as such we should gratefully take advantage of it.

2ND POINT.—Consider the many blessings the Gerasens might have derived from the presence of Jesus among them. But the love of earthly lucre prevailed over their hearts. They were altogether occupied with the loss they had undergone and might have to undergo, should they have to forego the profits of this illicit trade. Jesus departed from their coasts and we do not hear of His ever returning to them again. Little did they realise the loss they had incurred. Men frequently conduct themselves in a similar manner. It may be that we shall find ourselves to be no exception to that number. Our Lord's most ardent desire is to abide in our hearts and to reign supreme over us ; He wishes to communicate Himself to us and to lead us on to a high sanctity ; but to obtain this favour we must renounce some pleasure, some personal comfort or attachment, and we rather petition Our Lord to depart from us than to yield to His request. We shrink from the sacrifice of those earthly things on which we have set our hearts. We have no conception of the loss that we thereby incur, the many graces we forfeit and the danger we expose ourselves to, of losing Our Lord altogether in punishment for the disregard with which we have treated His favours. Let us then dwell in thought on the vanity of all that this earth can offer us, so that attachment to these things may never prove an obstacle to our progress in perfection.

CXXX. JAIRUS BESEECHES OUR LORD FOR THE CURE OF HIS DAUGHTER

And behold there came a man whose name was Jairus : and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at the feet of Jesus, beseeching him that he would come into his house : for he had an only daughter, almost twelve years old, and she was dying (Luke viii. 41-42).

Humbly ask Our Lord to stir up within your heart a fervent spirit of prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider how it was the anxiety for the life of his only child that impelled Jairus to implore the mercy and power of Jesus on her behalf. She was his only daughter, and if she died, what would all his wealth, nay the whole world still be to him ? If we could realise our needs and the dangers, not only to which our own souls are exposed, but also the souls committed to our care, we indeed would humbly cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus and earnestly implore His aid and protection. The serious consideration of the many dangers with which we are surrounded should urge us to approach Him who alone can save us, in a spirit of ardent prayer.

2ND POINT.—Consider the excellent qualities of the prayer of Jairus. His prayer is humbly and deeply reverent, although he is unaware of the true divine character of our Saviour. We who know Him to be God as well as Man have therefore much more reason to approach Him in prayer with still deeper sentiments of humility and reverence. As Jairus ardently desires what he is asking for, his prayer is most fervent. So too would our prayer increase in fervour, were we deeply conscious of our own needs and the needs of so many souls who perhaps depend on us for their salvation. Jesus is most ready to help us, but He will not do so unless we have recourse to Him. Jairus likewise prays with great confidence, for even though he hears of the death of his child his confidence does not waver. I have far greater evidence of the boundless mercy and power of Jesus ; yet, can I say that I trust Him as He desires ?

3RD POINT.—Consider what a power prayer exerts over the Heart of Jesus, when it proceeds from a soul truly humble and confident. As Our Lord heard at once the prayer of this afflicted man, so He gives ear to mine. Is it not a thought

of joy and consolation that we have in prayer such a powerful means of overcoming all our difficulties and temptations, of sanctifying ourselves, and of saving those souls committed to our charge ?

CXXXI. DEATH OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

While he was yet speaking, some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying : Thy daughter is dead. Why dost thou trouble the master any further ? (Mark v 35).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a firm resolve to devote your life entirely to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how death took away that child while yet so young. Neither she nor her parents had expected this. As parents usually do, they probably held up to her prospects of a long life, and built plans for her happiness. Death however visited them unexpectedly. Can I myself expect my life to end otherwise than in an unexpected manner ? Certain it is that death will come, but the time and circumstances are hidden from me. I may be still little advanced in years. Deceived by my health and vigour I may be forming manifold plans for the future ; and yet, death may be close at hand. Therefore my first duty is to keep myself in readiness, for death will decide my condition for eternity. While I have still time I should strive to atone for my sins, to repay the debts I owe God, and to reap merits for heaven ; the future is beyond my control :

2ND POINT.—Consider how this child, as the heiress of a man of wealth, had all the luxuries she might desire, in a home beautiful and richly furnished, in sumptuousness of dress, in intercourse with friends, in the attendance of numerous servants. She was surrounded by the loving care of her parents, and spent her life in great happiness with them. All this comfort derived from wealth, friends and parents is suddenly withdrawn from her by death. She has scarcely died when her corpse is got ready for the tomb. Those who loved her best make haste to have it removed. Such is death, and such shall be my condition one day. Am I wise then if I attach my heart to the perishable things of earth ? Far better indeed will it be

for me to have gathered treasures of which death cannot deprive me. The friend I shall then desire to have had during life will be Jesus from Whom death cannot separate me.

3RD POINT.—Consider the scene of the burial. Many people are gathered round the grave, and they exhibit signs of deep grief and lament. The deceased is the subject of conversation; some speak well of her, and perhaps others less favourably. But she is now beyond the reach of influence from their words. Her worth is what she is in the eyes of God and nothing more. Soon however she passes away from their thoughts and is forgotten. Reflect on what a similar issue your own life will have. Those among whom you have lived will soon cease to think of you. Whether you have won the applause of men or not, you shall only be what you are in the eyes of your sovereign Judge. How vain and foolish therefore to labour in order to win the esteem of the world, or to become remiss in one's duty towards God through the fear of what men may think or say?

CXXXII. JESUS RAISES THE DEAD CHILD TO LIFE

But Jesus having heard the word that was spoken, saith to the ruler of the synagogue : Fear not, only believe And he admitted not any man to follow him, but Peter and James and John the brother of James. And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. And he seeth a tumult ; and people weeping and wailing much. And going in, he saith to them : Why make you this ado and weep ? The damsel is not dead but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But he having put them all out, taketh the father and the mother of the damsel and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And taking the damsel by the hand, he saith to her : Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted : Damsel (I say to thee) arise. And immediately the damsel rose up and walked : and she was twelve years old. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them strictly that no man should know it : and commanded that something should be given her to eat (Mark v. 36-43).

Humbly ask Our Lord to fill your heart with the desire of living only for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord before performing this great miracle on behalf of Jairus expelled those mourners who continuing their futile laments showed little faith in Him. He did not wish to display His divine power in their presence. Jesus conducts Himself in a similar manner in His dealing with our souls. If we desire Him to speak to us, to enlighten us, to lead us to a life of sanctity, we must first expel from our hearts all worldly cares, all vain anxieties and sadness. When these are driven out, Jesus will enter our souls, and will lead us to a life of recollection in close union with Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider the wonderful power of Our Lord who by a word brings the dead to life. What is there then I may ask of Him which He cannot give me? And since I am fully aware of His great love for me what may I not hope from Him? No difficulty however great can obstruct my progress in perfection, while He is close by to help me to overcome it. I have therefore no reason whatever of becoming dispirited or downhearted in time of trial or temptation.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this child at once gives signs of the reality of the new life she has received by getting up and walking. In like manner should we give proofs of the divine life of grace which Jesus has so mercifully imparted to us. We should arise, shake off slothfulness, and proceed in a spirit of courage and generosity in the way of perfection. Just as Our Lord commanded that the risen child should receive something to eat lest the life restored to her so marvelously might not retain its wonted vitality; so does He command us to cherish with care the supernatural life of our souls which we have received from Him, lest through negligence or imprudence it may grow weak and be lost again. We should therefore firmly resolve to give our soul its food in fervent prayer, in the devout reception of the sacraments and earnest meditation on the word of God.

CXXXIII. JESUS' MERCY ON THE MULTITUDES

And Jesus went about all the cities, and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them : because they were distressed

and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then he said to his disciples : The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest (Matt. ix. 35-38).

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a great zeal for souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus spares no pains to save souls. He wearies Himself teaching the multitudes ; He preaches to them by His words but still more by the example of His holy life. After a long day of fatigue He often spends a great part of the night in prayer. How precious must the souls of men be in His eyes since He does so much to save them ! Now Jesus has invited me to assist Him in this great work ; He confides to my care those souls He so ardently loves ; hence, can I doubt that He expects from me that entire devotedness and self-sacrifice of which He has set so striking an example ? No, convinced as I am of the value of every soul, and knowing as I do how much their salvation may depend on my endeavours, my example, and the fervour of my prayers in their behalf, I cannot any longer be slothful and negligent in working at my own salvation or in fulfilling the duties of my ministry.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord looked with compassion on those multitudes who were distressed and lying like sheep without a shepherd ; He saw them weighed down with bodily and spiritual infirmities ; He saw them suffer without profit for their souls ; He saw them all anxiety about the things of this world, and so little concerned about their eternal interests ; He saw that there was nobody to raise their thoughts from things of earth to those of heaven, nobody to console them, to guide them, to help them to sanctify their sufferings ; He saw them as sheep without a shepherd, exposed on all sides to eternal perdition, and His loving Heart went out to them with an immense pity. Let me look around, and I too shall see thousands and thousands of people steeped in like misery. O Jesus, fill my heart with the love and compassion that led You to devote Yourself so entirely for their sake !

3RD POINT.—Consider how earnestly Jesus wants many labourers to work in His vineyard. But remember that what He wants are true labourers,—not such as waste their time in trifles or idleness, not such as think only of their own

comfort, their own pleasure, the satisfaction of their whims and fancies; but such as do not spare themselves, as devote themselves heart and soul to their work, and are even ready to give up their lives for the souls confided to their care. Let me answer loyally to this need of my Divine Master, and while I offer myself generously let me pray often and fervently that He may send many labourers, where there are so few, to carry on His work.

CXXXIV. THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

And he called the twelve and began to send them two and two and gave them power over unclean spirits. And he commanded them that they should take nothing for the way, but a staff only : no scrip, no bread, nor money in their purse (Mark vi. 7-8).

“ And fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore : better are you than many sparrows ” (Matt. x. 28-31).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with an ardent desire to work for Him and with a great confidence in His divine providence.

1ST POINT.—Consider the Apostles as they set out to work for the salvation of souls. They rightly esteem it a great honour to be chosen from among so many others to be the ambassadors of Christ and to share in His power. They have understood that no work can be nobler than to rescue from the slavery of the devil and to restore to their Heavenly Father those souls created to His own image and likeness. They are happy to work for such a kind and merciful Master, for a Master who treats His servants as His children, on whose almighty power they can always rely for protection, who shares all their joys and their sorrows and who is so liberal in rewarding the least thing done for Him. Turning now to yourself ponder slowly the many reasons you have to

be surprised at and grateful for God's mercy towards you. He has chosen you to become His apostle. He has made you a sharer in His power. Humbly rejoice, and return thanks, and resolve to do all you can to make yourself daily more worthy of so high a vocation.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus in sending His Apostles bids them renounce all the goods of this world, and confidently trust in the watchful and loving providence of their Heavenly Father. Although every priest is not called upon to regulate his life after the literal interpretation of these instructions, although Our Lord does not ask from every one a complete actual renunciation of all things, still all ought to imbue themselves with the spirit of detachment from the goods of this world ; and although all are not called to martyrdom as the Apostles were, we all ought to be ready to sacrifice our life in the service of our Divine Master. Hence we ought to accustom ourselves in all our works to rely in the first place on God's all-merciful and all-powerful providence and to seek in Him our strength and protection, our joy and consolation. How necessary then it is to cultivate a true spirit of prayer and to unite ourselves to God ever more intimately !

CXXXV. OUR LORD WARNS HIS APOSTLES BEFORE THEIR MISSION

The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household ? (Matt. x. 24-25).

Humbly beg Our Lord to inspire you with an ardent desire and a firm purpose to walk in His footsteps.

1ST POINT.—Consider the first words of Jesus :—The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord ; and reflect how much more truly may this be said when the Master is the Son of God and the disciple is my own wretched self. Would it not be utter folly and presumption on my part to wish to be above Him ? Let me then humble myself before my Lord, recognising His greatness and my

own nothingness, His wisdom and my ignorance, His holiness and my sinfulness. Let me rejoice at the same time at being allowed to be like Him, and offer myself to serve under Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Divine Master, the infinite Majesty, worthy of all praise and honour has chosen not only to be little, ignored and despised by men, but also to be loaded with outrages and crushed by the most cruel humiliations. Remember Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, *i. e.*, a prince of the devils, how much more them of the household? Shall I then, who claim to be His disciple pretend to more honour, more esteem than my Master? What reason have I to complain about the little humiliations I may have to undergo, I who am nothing, nay, worse than nothing,—a sinner? Should I not rather thank God and be glad because in something I am made like unto my Divine Master?

3RD POINT.—Consider that Jesus has come into the world to teach us how to sanctify ourselves, and how to work along with Him at saving souls. The way He has shown us is surely the best, in fact, the only good one. Now, He teaches us the way of humiliation and humility, to like being considered as nothing, to accept willingly any humiliation from God's hand. How unwise it would be of me to imagine I knew better than He who is Infinite Wisdom, and to choose another way than the one He has pointed out. I may perhaps have done so in the past. Instead of being hidden have I wished to appear before men? Instead of embracing humiliations have I tried to put myself above others? If so, let me now repent and be sorry, resolving firmly to guide myself in all things for the future by the example of My Divine Master.

CXXXVI. OUR LORD WARNS HIS APOSTLES WHOM HE SENDS TO PREACH

The disciple is not above the master (Matt. x. 25).

Humbly ask Our Lord to imprint deeply upon your heart this great lesson so that you may the more easily reduce it to practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord the King of heaven and earth, who commands the legions of angels and who is dispenser of life and death, has chosen for Himself a life of humble subjection to His own creatures. Looking upon Him who is my Divine Master, infinitely wise and powerful, become so submissive and lowly, shall I pretend to be independent, shall I grumble at the orders given me or—which God forbid—dare to act against them? Let me remember, that if Jesus has been so obedient, it was because He knew how advantageous and necessary obedience would be to me, and He wished to set me an example.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus who is the Lord of all the riches of the world, and who could without danger of misuse, have enjoyed all the comfort and honour riches can give, chose to renounce them all and to embrace a life of poverty. Think of the stable of Bethlehem, remember Nazareth, and contemplate your Divine Master earning His poor livelihood by doing hard lowly work. Then ask yourself, Am I His disciple? If so, should I attach my heart to those things which Jesus has forsaken for my sake? Alas, when I consider my condition, how far better off I find myself than the lowly Workman of Nazareth. And yet, I am only His servant and hence ought not to be better off than My Lord. If I grumble or complain when anything is wanting, how little do I prove myself a disciple of Jesus.

3RD POINT.—Consider how our Divine Master, although earthly pleasures were no danger for Him, chose a life of privation and suffering: “*proposito sibi gaudio, obtinuit crucem*, having joy set before Him, He endured the cross,” that is, He chose it for Himself. I am only a sinner who have deserved perhaps the punishment of hell. The pleasures of the world are full of danger for my soul. Shall I in spite of this knowledge desire to be above my Master, to be a delicate member of a head crowned with thorns? Whilst He has chosen the cross for His share, shall I lead a life of enjoyment and comfort? The servant ought not to be above his lord.

CXXXVII. OUR LORD WARNS HIS APOSTLES WHEN SENDING THEM TO PREACH

Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves (Matt. x. 16).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand the importance of this warning and to help you to reduce it to practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider Jesus' words: "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves." In these words Our Lord warns His Apostles beforehand of the violent opposition and bitter persecutions they will encounter in doing His work, that they may strengthen themselves at the source of all strength. But may we not apply them equally to ourselves? When we are sent to work at saving souls, we go out into a world full of sin and wickedness; by becoming priests we have not ceased to be men, liable to fall. And we too will be as defenceless sheep in the midst of wolves if we do not seek our strength in God by fervent prayer, and if we fail to use the means Our Lord Himself points out to us.

2ND POINT.—Consider Jesus' words: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents." Be careful not to throw yourself into, nor expose yourself to danger without necessity. Be careful to keep a continual guard over your heart, your thoughts, and your senses. Be careful to cut off without delay any inordinate affection and to subdue generously and at once any unruly passion that may spring up in your breast. Woe to the priest who deems himself proof against temptation and considers precautions a vain anxiety.

3RD POINT.—Consider Jesus' words: "Be simple as doves." The simplicity which Our Lord recommends so earnestly to His Apostles consists for the most part in that purity and oneness of intention which causes us to seek in all we do and say, only the good pleasure and the glory of God. Think of a priest who still hankers after the glory of the world, who tries to gather money, to win the affection and esteem of men. How many merits he loses; how often he turns away from his heart the blessings of God, whose glory he neglects to run after worldly advantage! How recklessly he exposes himself to great danger by allowing the worldly spirit to enter his soul! Remember Who it is that gives you these warnings.

It is the Infinite Wisdom who knows much better than yourself the dangers to which you are exposed. Make up your mind to listen to Him, to seek protection and strength in Him, and you shall have nothing to fear.

CXXXVIII. THE IMPRISONMENT OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

For Herod had apprehended John and bound him and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife. For John said to him: It is not lawful for thee to have her (Matt. xiv. 3, 4) — Now Herodias laid snares for him and was desirous to put him to death: and could not. For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man, and kept him: and when he heard him, did many things. And he heard him willingly (Mark vi. 19-20).

Humbly ask Our Lord for great zeal and fervour in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. John called by God to make ready the way for the Redeemer had prepared himself for this grand mission from his very infancy. He had retired to the desert that he might keep his heart pure from all contact with the world, and he had spent many years in fervent prayer and mortification to sanctify himself before working for the sanctification of others. In how very many points your vocation resembles that of St. John. You also must sanctify yourself if you wish to fulfil your duties worthily; you also must mortify your evil inclinations, lest they become obstacles to you in the work of saving souls; you also must cultivate the spirit of prayer and lead a life of union with God. And even if God does not demand of you all He obtained from St. John, the graces He bestows will be in the measure of the efforts put forth.

2ND POINT.—Consider the admirable constancy with which St. John fulfilled his mission. He worked at the conversion of sinners without minding hardship or fatigue, and without heeding what the world might say. He foresaw that in upbraiding Herod he would draw down upon himself the hatred of Herodias; but no fear could hold him back

from his duty. What an example for us, who so easily perhaps fail to carry out our good resolutions, who allow ourselves to swerve from our duty because of some little sacrifice, some little inconvenience or discomfort, some little hardship. What then was it that made St. John so firm and constant? He had sought and found his strength in God. There it is that I too must seek it; there shall I find it.

3RD POINT.—Consider how all this time Our Lord did not come to St. John, not even when he was in prison. Only once or twice in his whole life did Our Lord grant his forerunner the sweet consolation of His presence. Yet we know how Jesus loved and esteemed him. St. John bore this, Our Lord's way of acting, admirably. He did not relax his fervour one tittle, nor grow weary in the accomplishment of his mission. How consoling this is for those whom God tries by aridity in prayer while they do their very best to serve Him. Let them console themselves with the thought that such a trial can only make them dearer to God and become for them as for St. John a powerful means of sanctification. If this should happen to us, let us not be disheartened but persevere bravely after the example set us by the holy Precursor.

CXXXIX. THE DEATH OF ST. JOHN

But on Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask of him. But she, being instructed before by her mother, said: Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was struck sad: yet because of his oath and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given. And he sent and beheaded John in the prison (Matt. xiv 6-10).

Humbly ask Our Lord to bestow upon you great constancy and firmness in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Herod having once given way to his passions is led on by them from crime to crime. The same thing happens to all those who neglect to curb their evil inclinations. Sometimes matters begin with a trifle, but if unchecked, the evil inclinations grow stronger and stronger

till finally they obtain full sway over the soul, and may lead to any sin. Let this example of Herod be a warning to us and make us firmly resolve to crush without hesitation any inordinate inclination that may arise in our hearts.

2ND POINT.—Consider how God allows St. John to suffer persecution and to be put to a cruel death. Yet St. John had served His Divine Master most faithfully ; nay more, Our Lord Himself had borne public witness to the holiness of his life. How then can we explain this ? The true and only solution is that God's ways are not our ways, and that God takes of suffering a view quite different from that which the world does. God looks upon it as a most potent means of sanctification, a method for storing up in heaven happiness so great that it will abundantly compensate whatever His servants have bravely endured here below. Of course it stands to reason that God's view is the right one. I cannot reasonably adopt another. Shall I then not accept patiently and humbly, nay, and with gratitude, whatever cross it may please God to send me ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. John accepted this cruel and unjust sentence of death. He accepted it as from God's hand, and hence not only with humble resignation but even with interior joy esteeming himself fortunate to give his life in so holy a cause.

Whenever I am wronged, however great the injustice done, let me take it in the proper spirit not considering who they are that cause me pain, but accepting it as a token of love from the fatherly hand of God. Then shall I be truly wise, and all suffering shall become a means of growing dearer to God and securing a richer reward in heaven.

CXL. THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES (*1st Meditation*)

And taking them (the Apostles), he went aside into a desert place, apart, which belongeth to Bethsaida. Which when the people knew, they followed him : and he received them and spoke to them of the Kingdom of God and healed them who had need of healing. Now the day began to decline. And the twelve came

and said to him : Send away the multitude, that, going into the towns and villages round about, they may lodge and get victuals ; for we are here in a desert place. But he said to them : Give you them to eat. And they said : We have no more than five loaves and two fishes ; unless perhaps we should go and buy food for all this multitude. Now there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples : Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven and blessed them : and he broke and distributed to his disciples, to set before the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled. And there were taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets (Luke ix. 10-17).

“ Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said : This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, when he knew that they would come to take him by force and make him King, fled again into the mountain, himself alone ” (John vi. 14-15).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know Him better and to inspire you with great love and confidence towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the eagerness with which those people followed Our Lord to listen to His holy lessons, and to be helped and cured by Him. They knew Him much less than I do. I know Him to be the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, full of mercy and power and ready to help me in all my needs. Shall I then show less anxiety than they did to learn from Him the science of the saints, and to obtain from Him the grace that will sanctify me and cure my soul of its weaknesses and miseries ? Firmly resolve to apply yourself henceforward to the acquisition of a true spirit of prayer

2ND POINT.—Consider carefully Our Lord’s mercy towards those multitudes : He is indefatigable in teaching them and helping them in their needs. Remember what He has done and is still doing for you : what a special care He has taken of you, body and soul, all your life long, even when perhaps you deserved it so little. Thank Him for His mercy and promise to make amends for the past by serving Him with a grateful heart for the time to come.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus before multiplying the loaves and fishes bids all the people sit down in order. God has settled that each one of us should do some special work

under some special circumstances of time and place ; and it is in that work that His special graces await us. Were we always to keep this truth in mind, how gladly would we put ourselves at the disposal of His divine providence, how readily would we go where He sends us, how earnestly would we do the work He points out to us by our superiors. And what special blessings would attend our labours !

CXLI. THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES (*2nd Meditation*)

The narrative of the Gospel is the same as in the previous meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with deep gratitude and ardent love towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this multiplication of the loaves, although a great miracle, is but a shadow of the miracle by which Our Divine Lord multiplies His presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, that heavenly bread by which He feeds the souls, not of five thousand, but of millions and millions of His children, all over the world. Reflect how Jesus seeing us so weak and slow to follow Him has devised this wonderful plan, to leave us His body and blood as our daily food that He may strengthen us with His own strength. What should we be without holy communion ? without Jesus in our midst ? How thankful we should be for this great and continued miracle ; with what feelings of admiration, respect and love it must inspire us for Him who has found such a means to nourish and sanctify our souls.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the multitude lost in admiration and overflowing with gratitude wanted to make Jesus their king. They rightly considered that one so good, so wise, so powerful was surely most worthy to reign over them. He would protect them, and deliver them from their enemies and oppressors. How secure and happy they would live under such a king. Is the Holy Eucharist not an incomparably greater proof of Jesus' wisdom, goodness and power than the multiplication of the loaves ? How much more intensely should it excite all those sentiments of admiration and gratitude in our hearts.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus while refusing a temporal kingdom ardently longs to reign in our hearts. He longs to hold sway over our every thought, desire, word and action. Are we sincerely grateful for His graces as we ought to be? If so, let us prove it, by banishing from our hearts whatever has prevented Our Lord's reigning entirely in them. Let us proclaim Him our King. And while seeking to know what may be an obstacle to His further action in our hearts let us resolve to remove at once those things which we know displease Him at present.

CXLII. JESUS WALKS ON THE WAVES

And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat and to go before him over the water, till he dismissed the people. And having dismissed the multitude, he went into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening he was there alone. But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking upon the sea. And they, seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying: It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart. It is I. Fear ye not (Matt. xiv. 22-27).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may learn to see the hand of divine Providence in the difficulties and troubles of this life, and put your entire confidence in him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Apostles when embarking on Jesus' command had expected to cross the water easily, and soon to be on the opposite shore, where they would once more enjoy their Master's holy presence. But Jesus had disposed things otherwise: a strong wind arose, and after rowing nearly the whole night they had advanced very little and their boat was being tossed about by the waves. Does not the same thing often happen to us? We take good resolutions; it seems to us that henceforth all will run smoothly when, lo! a contrary wind begins to blow, temptations arise, and we find ourselves the plaything of the inordinate inclinations of our heart. Notwithstanding all our efforts we are tossed about and seem to make no headway; we are thrown back again and again by the faults into which we repeatedly relapse.

Why does Our Lord allow this ? It is because He knows how readily we attribute to ourselves the good that is in us, and He wants us to learn by experience how powerless we are, how incapable of anything without His help, so that pride may not spoil our actions. Resolve never to be discouraged by adversity, but whilst humbly recognising your own nothingness, have full confidence in divine Providence.

2ND POINT.—And they, seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying : “ It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear.” They had not expected to meet Jesus coming in that manner ; and so, failing to recognise Him, were filled with fear. How often does this same thing happen to us. We have resolved to serve Our Divine Master. We had decided to succeed in some work undertaken for Him, and He comes to us in failure and humiliation. We had hoped to find Him in labouring for Him, and he comes to us in sickness. We had trusted to find Him in the sweetness of fervent prayer, and He comes to us in aridity and desolation, in struggle and temptation. And we fail to recognise Him. Like the Apostles we cry out in dismay and are troubled in mind when there is no reason for anxiety, for it is truly Jesus Who thus comes to us. Let us beg of Him to teach us to recognise Him in all the dispositions of His Providence so that He may also say to us, “ Be of good heart ; it is I. Fear ye not.”

CXLIII. ST. PETER WALKS ON THE WATERS

And Peter making answer, said : Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters. And he said : Come. And Peter going down out of the boat walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid : and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying : Lord, save me And immediately Jesus stretching forth his hand took hold of him and said to him : O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt ? And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat came and adored him, saying : Indeed thou art the Son of God. And having passed the water, they came into the country of Genesar (Matt. xiv. 28-34).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your confidence in Him and to strengthen you in your resolve to serve Him faithfully.

1ST POINT.—Behold St. Peter, confident of His divine Master's infinite power, steps courageously out of the boat and walks upon the waters. But a moment later seeing the waves rise around him and feeling them heave under his feet, he loses his confidence and at once begins to sink. We naturally ask ourselves, Why should St. Peter have feared? Was it not at Jesus' bidding that he had come to Him on the waters? Did he not know Jesus' infinite power? Could he not be perfectly sure that his Divine Master who loved him so well would not allow him to perish? All most reasonable suggestions. Let me apply them to myself. It is Jesus, the same Jesus who has called me to the priesthood; it is He who through my superiors has appointed me to the work I have in hand. Knowing as I do the greatness of His power and the sincerity of His love for me shall I not fully trust in Him? Provided I humbly do my best will He not help me through all difficulties and trials? And shall I not deserve to be rebuked by Our Lord, as St. Peter was, if I allow myself to be disheartened by obstacles and temptations and anxieties about the future?

2ND POINT.—Once Jesus got into the boat, it soon touched the shore to which they were making way. The Apostles had been rowing with all their might the greater part of the night, but had scarcely made any headway against the storm. Jesus gets into the little boat and they land almost immediately. What a source of encouragement for those who strive their utmost, but never seem to advance on the path to perfection. Jesus lets them feel their weakness till they are really humble, and acknowledge that all good comes from God. Then He intervenes and, aided by His powerful grace, they advance rapidly. Let me make earnest efforts; let me even use my faults as a means to root out all the pride from my heart; let me place unbounded trust in God; and in due time with God's powerful assistance I shall reach the goal of my endeavours.

CCXLIV. THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Jesus speaking to the multitudes says: I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert: and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live

for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world...For my flesh is meat indeed : and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me : and I in him. After this, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Then Jesus said to the twelve : Will you also go away ? And Simon Peter answered him : Lord to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life (John vi. 48-57, 67-69).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a burning desire for the Holy Eucharist.

1ST POINT.—This is the bread which cometh down from heaven ; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. We have received from God the supernatural life of sanctifying grace by which we become God's children and heirs to His heavenly kingdom. It is a treasure a thousand times more precious than our temporal life. How ardently we should long to preserve it ! How eagerly partake of the heavenly food that will nourish that life in us ! Such is the Holy Eucharist ; for, says the Council of Trent, it is a heavenly medicine that tears up from the heart the shoots of venial sins and prevents mortal sin from striking roots.

2ND POINT.—" If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." The life that is in him will be strengthened, and keep growing so that the beauty of his soul will increase. It will make him fit for great things. It will make him powerful against his enemies. Is not this my most earnest desire ? Should I not then be most eager for this heavenly bread Jesus has prepared for me ?

3RD POINT.—" He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him." This is the third effect of Holy Communion in those who receive it worthily. It unites them intimately with Him who is the source of all holiness, the fountain head of all wisdom and strength, the furnace of divine love. What a marvellous union ! How worthy to be yearned after with our heart's fondest longings, since by it our hearts are loaded with heavenly gifts that shall make them rich and happy for all eternity !

CXLV. OUR LORD REPROVES THE PHARISEES

Then came to him from Jerusalem scribes and Pharisees, saying : Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients ? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answering, said to them : Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition ? For God said : Honour thy father and mother : And : He that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death. But you say : Who-soever shall say to father or mother, The gift whatsoever proceedeth from me, shall profit thee. And he shall not honour his father or his mother : and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition.. Hypocrites, well hath Isaiah prophesied of you, saying : This people honoureth me with their lips : but their heart is far from me (Matt. xv. 1-8).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a deep aversion for all pride and uncharitableness.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Pharisees dogged the steps of Jesus, not with the intention of profiting by His teaching but to find fault with Him and to belittle Him in the eyes of His people. Their pride received a check when they saw Jesus so eagerly followed. Their jealousy was aroused by the influence He acquired and they plotted to destroy it. Ponder over the evil fruits of pride : it drew the Pharisees into many faults ; it held them aloof from the incomparable advantages of Jesus' instruction and example. If they had only been humble they would have amended their ways and might have become saints. Pride made them rebel against the Saviour's warnings, fostered hatred against Him and in the end made them His murderers. Reflect on this : if we give pride access to our hearts it will become in us an obstacle to self-correction, it will cause us to resent the warnings of our superiors, it will gradually embitter us against them and, in fine, it will not only put a stop to all advancement in the way of perfection but will also become the source of many sins.

2ND POINT.—Consider especially how pride brought the Pharisees to commit many faults against charity. Blind to their own serious transgressions, imagining themselves better than the rest of men, they criticised the small failings of others whilst they overlooked their own misdeeds. Think of the harm such a way of acting does the soul. Probe your

conscience to discover whether pride is not manifesting itself in a similar manner in you ; and remember that one day you shall have to answer for your faults before the tribunal of God.

3RD POINT.—Consider how very severely Our Lord reproves this pride and uncharitableness of the Pharisees. How terrible then shall be the judgment of God on those who, like them, shall have put themselves above all others, criticised or belittled their actions and have been merciless on their trifling failings. Oh, how much reason have we to be truly humble and merciful, that we too may obtain the mercy of which we have so much need.

CXLVI. THE PETITION OF THE CANAANEAN WOMAN

And Jesus went from thence and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to him : Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David : my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying : Send her away, for she crieth after us. And he answering, said : I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But she came and adored him, saying : Lord, help me. Who answering, said : It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs. But she said : Yea, Lord ; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering, said to her : O woman, great is thy faith. Be it done to thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was cured from that hour (Matt. xv. 21-28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a living spirit of faith and confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this poor mother, so deeply afflicted about her child, on hearing that Jesus was passing by, felt her courage revive and at once resolved not to miss so excellent an opportunity to obtain the cure of her daughter. Being a pagan, she knew little of Jesus ; but she had heard how kind and merciful He was, and how powerful to cure the

sick and drive out evil spirits. This filled her with hope and confidence. Shall I who know Jesus so much better than this woman, give way to discouragement when the devil and my passions tempt me? Jesus is always with me; He invites in a special way those to come to Him that suffer and are heavily burdened, and I may be sure that He will never reject the prayer of a humble heart.

2ND POINT.—Consider the simplicity, the faith, the perseverance of this poor woman's prayer. She does not use many words, but simply lays bare her sorrow before Our Lord. Her faith does not waver when Jesus seems deaf to her prayer. The rebuke administered far from shaking her confidence serves but to enkindle the fervour of her petition; and the words of Jesus that would have aroused indignation in one less humble, cause her to lower herself still more that she may be heard. What a beautiful example for us, who perhaps pray with so little fervour, so little humility, so little perseverance, and so easily leave off prayer when not heard at once.

CXLVII. JESUS CURES THE DAUGHTER OF THE CANAANEAN WOMAN

The narrative of the Gospel is the same as in the previous meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a living faith and confidence in His infinite mercy.

1ST POINT.—Consider how although Our Lord intends to hear the prayer of this poor woman, He acts towards her as if He were decided not to do so. Our Lord knew the depth of her faith and wanted to bring it out as an example to others; and He was fully prepared to make ample compensation for the severe test to which He submitted her. Let us learn from this that when God puts off hearing our prayers, He always has some object in view. This object we may not always understand, but we can always be sure that it is worthy of His infinite goodness and wisdom. Let us learn too that, if weighed down with trial, we still remain true to the confidence we owe to God on so many titles, we shall be amply rewarded for it.

2ND POINT.—Consider the way in which this good woman accepts the humiliation Jesus imposed upon her. How willingly she recognises herself unworthy ! How readily she takes her place far below the children of God's chosen people ! And yet, her humility betrays no discouragement. The recognition of her lowliness increases her reliance on the mercy of Jesus. Can we help admiring this example of true Christian humility given to us by a pagan ? And when Our Lord for good reasons of His own humbles us by showing us our weakness and misery, let us imitate this poor woman. Then instead of being disheartened we will convert our weakness into a real motive to trust the more in God's mercy. By doing so we shall honour the infinite goodness of our Divine Master as well as His fidelity to His promises.

3RD POINT.—Consider the magnificent praise Our Lord bestows on the Canaanee woman and how He cures her child. He had been sent to save the lost sheep of Israel ; the blessings of the Redemption were to be extended only later to the Gentiles through His Apostles ; but Our Lord departs from His line of conduct, moved by this humble confiding prayer. "The prayer of him that humbles himself," says Holy Scripture, "penetrates the clouds." How powerful is humble, confident, persevering prayer on the heart of Our Lord !

CXLVIII. OUR LORD FORETELLS HIS PASSION

From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests : and be put to death and the third day rise again. And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him, saying : Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Who turning, said to Peter : Go behind me, Satan : thou art a scandal unto me, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men. Then Jesus said to his disciples : If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matt. xvi. 21-24).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great love for Him and a generous determination to follow in His footsteps.

1ST POINT.—Consider that sin had entered the world by self-love, pride and sensuality, and in the plans of infinite Wisdom it had to be conquered by self-denial, humiliation and

suffering. Jesus had come into the world to set the example by His own heroic self-denial, His humiliations and His passion. St. Peter prompted by human views and purely human attachment to his Divine Master makes an attempt to dissuade Him from accomplishing His mission. Thereupon Our Lord rebukes him severely : “ Go behind me, Satan ” ; that is, adversary of God’s plans ; thou art a scandal unto me ;—that is, you try to stop me from doing my duty. Thus it was that the world had then to be saved, and it is still the same now. If I wish to save and sanctify myself and to do good to others, I must oppose self-denial to self-love, self-humiliation to pride, and mortification to sensuality.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus : “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” What then should we priests do, who certainly have the will to follow Our Lord and to be his true disciples ? Are we not bound to live up to the programme sketched for us by Our Divine Master ? And how far should we be from it, and how unworthy of him, if in our lives we were to seek nought but our comfort, our ease and enjoyment, instead of sacrificing ourselves to duty ; if we were to run after the honour and esteem of the world, if we coveted high rank and lofty station, and took it ill when God sends us humiliations. Let us reflect upon our dispositions ; if we have like St. Peter savoured not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men, let us take a firm resolution to amend lest we draw down upon ourselves the severity of God’s judgments.

3RD POINT.—Consider the last words of Our Lord : “ And follow me.” Jesus is our leader. The way He leads is the way of the Cross, “ than which,” says Thomas a Kempis, “ there can be no grander or safer one. Jesus has gone before you carrying His cross and has died for you upon the cross that you might have strength to carry yours and be willing to die upon it. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him ; if you have been a sharer in His sufferings, you shall also share His glory ” (*Imitation* ii. 12). Resolve to follow your divine Guide and Master generously.

CXLIX. THE TRANSFIGURATION

And after six days, Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun : and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus : Lord, it is good for us to be here : if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying : This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him (Matt. xvii. 1-5).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your love and reverence for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider those who were chosen by Our Lord to be the witnesses of His glorious transfiguration. They were St. Peter conspicuous for his living faith and generosity, St. James eminent for his spirit of prayer, St. John the Apostle especially loved by Jesus on account of his virginal purity. It is to such as these that Our Lord likes to make Himself known already in this life. Think what a great favour, what a source of strength, of courage and heavenly peace this intimate knowledge of Jesus is ; and resolve to make yourself more and more worthy of it, by cultivating those same virtues that distinguished these three Apostles.

2ND POINT.—Consider how it was during prayer, as St. Luke remarks, that Jesus was thus transfigured, His face shining like the sun, and His garments becoming white as snow. Notice how vividly Our Lord puts before us the effects of fervent prayer on the soul. If I am a man of humble, earnest and persevering prayer, God will pour down in great abundance His graces upon my soul, and make it resplendent with holiness and purity. Such a favour is most worthy of my serious and generous efforts.

3RD POINT.—Think how the three Apostles were in an ecstasy of joy at the sight, and would willingly have remained there forever. And still they had caught, just for a passing moment, only a glimpse of their glorified Master. O the happiness of heaven, where the saints enjoy forever the surpassing beauty of God ! Can any sacrifice be too great to attain such a happiness ?

CL. JESUS TEACHES THE NECESSITY OF HUMILITY

At that hour, the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who thinkest thou is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xviii. 1-4).

Humbly ask Our Lord to imprint these words deeply upon your heart and to inspire you with a firm determination to put them in practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Apostles, after having been so long with Our Lord and after having had His example so constantly before their eyes, were still hankering after honours and worldly glory. Pride dies hard in the heart of man. Let us then examine ourselves and see whether we too like to be thought better of than others, whether we prefer ourselves to others. Let us inquire whether we are jealous, or at least not pleased when praise and compliments are the share of others. And yet we are ready to acknowledge how unworthy we are of esteem, seeing how full of miseries we are, and how often we have offended God and abused of His graces.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus: “Unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” The Apostles were to be raised to a high dignity and to do great things for God; precisely on this account all the greater would have been the danger of pride, a fall into which might have ruined their souls. Great too, because of his dignity, is the danger of pride for a priest, and it might easily lead him to eternal perdition. How very necessary is the practice of humility!

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus: “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.” The more humble we are, the more glory we give to God; whilst pride in the gifts of God, or in the works we perform robs God of the glory that belongs to Him alone. No wonder, then, that God’s choicest gifts are for the humble. He likes to make Himself better known to them, He draws them into a closer union with

Himself, He sanctifies and prepares them for a high place in heaven. From the proud, on the contrary, He turns away and hides Himself, He withdraws His graces, and leaves them exposed to the greatest danger. Let us pray fervently that Jesus meek and humble of heart may make our heart like unto His.

CLI. JESUS TEACHES THE FORGIVENESS OF WRONGS

Then came Peter unto him and said : Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him ? Till seven times ? Jesus saith to him : I say not to thee, till seven times, but till seventy times seven times. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down besought him, saying : Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow servants that owed him an hundred pence : and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying : Pay what thou owest. And his fellow servant, falling down, besought him, saying : Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And he would not : but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved : and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him and said to him : Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me : shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee ? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts (Matt. xviii. 21-35).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a firm resolution to be merciful to all who offend you.

1ST POINT.—Consider that one day God will also call you to render an account, and think how heavy are the debts

you have contracted. As this servant was altogether unable to meet his debts, so you too can never satisfy fully what you owe to God. How necessary it is therefore for you to obtain mercy and how gladly should you strive to secure a favourable judgment !

2ND POINT.—Consider how this king not only was patient with his servant, but granted him a full pardon of his immense debt. In like manner has God been merciful to you. Think of the overwhelming debt which you could never have paid, and admire the tender mercy of God towards you and be deeply grateful. Make up your mind never to contract debts again for fear He might justly punish you.

3RD POINT.—Consider the trifling sum that was due to this man by his fellow servant in comparison with the debt that had been pardoned him. The same is true of any offences committed against us, when compared with those by which we have offended God. If we forget this, and are unwilling to be merciful, we shall, as Jesus clearly shows by this parable, surely draw down upon ourselves the just wrath of God and prepare for ourselves a most severe judgment. “For,” says the Holy Ghost, “judgment without mercy for him that hath not done mercy” (St. James ii. 13).

CLII. A SCRIBE ASKS TO BECOME A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

And it came to pass, as they walked in the way, that a certain man said to him : I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Jesus said to him : The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head (Luke xi. 57, 58).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand what He expects from you and to give you the necessary courage to do it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this Scribe had conceived the wish and had made up his mind to follow Jesus. But from Our Lord's words we may conclude that this man little understood what such a following implied. Perhaps seeing

how powerful Jesus was, and how the crowds admiringly went after Him, the man was only aiming at some worldly advantage ; to obtain, for example, as a disciple of Christ, a share in His power and in the honour bestowed on Him. Our Lord at once undeceived him, showing how vain and altogether false such expectations were, so that he might either purify his intention or abandon his project. If, then, I have some worldly advantage in view in following Our Lord let me persuade myself that I am not in the right dispositions. Jesus expects something more from me, and hence I must by all means purify my intention.

2ND POINT.—Meditate on the answer of Jesus. It amounts to this : “ Your desire to follow me is good indeed, but think what following me means. My life is a life of poverty, of labour, of self-sacrifice ; this is what you shall have to share with Me.” Consider these words as addressed to you. If you want to be a real follower of Jesus and to work efficaciously with Him at the salvation of souls, your life ought not to be one of enjoyment and comfort but a life void of attachment to things of this world, a life of indefatigable labour and noble self-sacrifice.

3RD POINT.—Consider on the other hand how all this does not imply a life that is unhappy. No, whatever share you may be invited to have in Jesus’ poverty, privations and self-sacrifice, shall be amply compensated for by Jesus’ intimate friendship in this world and a priceless reward in the next. The Gospel does not tell us whether this scribe persevered in his resolution or not. How happy is he now if he did ! How he must regret it if he did not !

CLIII. THE CONDITIONS REQUISITE TO FOLLOW JESUS

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it : and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it (Matt. x. 37-39).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a generous resolution of devoting yourself entirely to His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the first words of Jesus : “ He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” God Himself has commanded us to honour and love father and mother ; this love then is a sacred duty. But still we must love Our Lord more than we love our parents, that is, we must never allow the fondness for our parents to prevent us from doing our duty to God. How much more unworthy of our Divine Master are those that allow the love of a lower order, or self-love to come between them and God. If I really intend to be Jesus’ disciple I must make up my mind once for all to put Him and His holy service above any other consideration. Do I not sometimes fail in this ? Let me humble myself before Our Lord and take a firm resolution of amendment.

2ND POINT.—Consider the second warning of Jesus : “ He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me.” The cross is the humiliations and sufferings that God may send us. In God’s service we shall of necessity meet them ; and if we rebel against them, if we grumble at them, if we allow them to dishearten us or make us shirk our duty, we surely cannot believe that we are taking up our cross and following Jesus. No, we must acknowledge how unworthy we are of the Divine Master who has chosen us for His holy service. Let us resolve that this will never be the case.

3RD POINT.—Consider the third warning of Our Lord : “ He that findeth his life shall lose it.” If we really wish to follow Our Lord we must be ready not only to put up with humiliations and sufferings for His sake, but even, with the assistance of grace, to sacrifice our lives. A priest who saves his life at the expense of his duties exposes himself to lose it eternally. And if God call us to sacrifice life to duty, happy are we ; for we are sure to find life everlasting. Beg for grace and strength to be ever loyal in God’s service.

CLIV. MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN JESUS

When he spoke these things, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him : If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth : and the truth shall make you free. They answered him : We are the seed of Abraham : and we have never been slaves to

any man. How sayest thou : You shall be free ? Jesus answered them : Amen, amen, I say unto you that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham (John viii. 30-39).

Humbly ask the grace to regulate all your actions by the faith that is in you.

1ST POINT.—Consider this saying of Our Lord : “ If you continue in my word ” ; that is, if you persevere in observing faithfully what I am teaching you, then indeed you shall be my disciples. Of course we believe all Our Lord has taught because we know Him to be the very Truth. This faith is a great gift of God, one for which we can never be thankful enough. Yet if we mean to be true disciples of Jesus, we ought to make this belief the living rule and guide of our thoughts and desires, our words and actions. By this we shall know if we are true followers of the Divine Teacher. How utterly unreasonable it would be to fail to make use of the infallible light God has granted us ! How wilfully we should deceive ourselves by acting against it !

2ND POINT.—Consider in the next place those words of Our Lord : “ You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” Notice that if you steadily practise the teachings of Our Lord, He will shed upon your soul with ever increasing refulgence that celestial light which will make Himself and heavenly things better and better known to you ; He will help you to esteem all things at their true value, thus saving you from many faults and dangers, and setting you free from the snares of the devil and the slavery of sin. Will such advantages not urge me to make faith the practical guide of my life ?

3RD POINT.—Ponder over those words : “ If you are the children of Abraham, then do the works of Abraham ; ” that is, prove yourselves the worthy children of such a father. We are the children of God, we are His representatives with men : let this dignity be for us no mere distinction. How we should abase ourselves if we became slaves to creatures, to our passions, to the devil ! How dishonourable, if we, the heirs to the kingdom of heaven, were to stoop to the vain things of earth ! How disloyal to our title of Ambassadors of Christ did we not put forth our utmost energy to represent Him worthily before men by the imitation of His virtues ! If we have frequently failed to do this, let us humbly ask God to help us to do better.

CLV. THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (*1st Meditation*)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and flieth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling: and he hath no care for the sheep (John x. 11-13).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a sincere and self-sacrificing zeal for souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Good Shepherd, Our Lord, ought to be our model. How sincerely He loves His sheep! They are His own. He sees in each of them the image of His Heavenly Father. Perhaps they are wayward and give much trouble, yet He constantly watches over them that no wolf may approach to devour them. He picks out for them rich and wholesome pastures; and if need be, He stoutly defends them, never shrinking from danger and even giving His life to save them. Behold the model Our Lord presents to His priests to whose care He has confided a part of His flock. Jesus wants the priest to love his sheep with His own love, to love the poor, the ignorant, the little ones, the sinner. He warns them to keep vigilant watch, lest the wolf snatch one away and devour it. His wish is that they feed their flock assiduously with the word of God; that they mind no fatigue, no failure; that they spend themselves, and if need be sacrifice their very life to save souls. What a model to keep before my eyes and generously to imitate! By making me His priest, the Good Shepherd has conferred a great honour upon me, and hopes for great things from me, if only I do my duty.

2ND POINT.—The hireling that is not the shepherd is the image of the priest who neglects his flock, who sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flies, because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. He sees the dangers to which the flock committed to his care is exposed; but love of ease, dread of labour, fear of danger, lack of true devotedness make him careless. Think of the terrible responsibility such a hireling shall have before the tribunal of God whose sheep he has allowed to perish.

CLVI. THE GOOD SHEPHERD (*2nd Meditation*)

I am the good shepherd : and I know mine, and mine know me....My sheep hear my voice. And I know them : and they follow me. And I give them life everlasting : and they shall not perish for ever. And no man shall pluck them out of my hand (John x. 14, 27, 28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make Himself better known to you and to fill your heart with love and confidence.

1ST POINT. Consider how Our Lord has been the Good Shepherd to you. How He has laboured and suffered for you ; how He has watched over you, bringing you back when you had gone astray ; how He has fed your soul with His teaching and example, nay, with the heavenly food of His own flesh and blood ; how He has protected you from dangers of soul and body ; how He has died to save you. Can you remember all this without your heart overflowing with gratitude, without being filled with confidence in Him, without strengthening your determination to remain closely united with Him, so that you may enjoy His care and protection.

2ND POINT.—Consider Jesus' words : " I know mine." Words of true consolation : He knows our difficulties, our troubles, our sorrows and sufferings, our dangers and temptations ; He knows our weaknesses and all our needs ; He understands them perfectly, much better than anybody else and is always at hand to help us. What boundless confidence I should have in Him, however great the difficulties I encounter. Shall I not cast myself and my dearest interests into His keeping trusting fully in His infinite mercy, wisdom and power ? When I was a sinner He gave His life for me, what may I not expect from Him now that I am His ?

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus : " My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me." These are the signs by which I may know if I belong entirely to Jesus. To whose voice do I listen, to the voice of Jesus or to that of the world and my passions ? The voice of Jesus prompts me to cherish humility, obedience, patience and charity ; the voice of the world excites me to pride, sensuality, independence. If only I could keep before my eyes the holy lessons and example of Our Lord and strive to walk in His footsteps ! Happy should I be, for then would be verified in me those words : " and I give them life everlasting ; and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand."

CLVII. JESUS PRONOUNCES WOE ON THE LAKE CITIES

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein were done the most of his miracles, for that they had not done penance. Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee (Matt. xi. 20-24).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may never neglect or abuse of graces received from Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider why Jesus utters such terrible threats against those cities. It is because they had received special graces from God and had neglected them. Let these words of Our Lord remind you of all the favours God has bestowed upon you, so many more than upon thousands of others. Perhaps many with the same graces that you have received would have become saints. Think what you will answer Almighty God if you have made light of His favours through negligence and tepidity in His service.

2ND POINT.—Consider what it was that prevented the inhabitants of those cities from corresponding to God's grace. First, it was their disorderly attachment to the goods of this world; their thoughts and desires preoccupied with the pursuit of riches had no leisure for the affairs of their immortal souls. Secondly, there was sensuality: they were entirely bent on enjoying life upon earth. Thirdly, there came pride: this led them to despise the teaching of Our Lord who insisted on humility and penance. If I fail to correspond to God's grace, if my life is not as fervent as it ought to be, if I am negligent at prayer, or slothful in the fulfilment of my duty let me examine and see to which of these causes my fault is due and promise immediate amendment.

3RD POINT.—Reflect upon the terrible punishment with which Our Lord threatens these cities, a punishment more severe than that which shall be meted out to the infidel. What then shall be the punishment of the priest who has misused or neglected the wonderful and abundant graces God has not ceased to shower upon him ?

CLVIII. JESUS AND THE LITTLE AND HUMBLE

At that time, Jesus answered and said : I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones (Matt. xi. 25).

And turning to his disciples, he said : Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see (Luke x. 23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a desire to practise humility.

1ST POINT.—Consider who were the wise and prudent from whom the things of heaven remained hidden. They were the Scribes and Pharisees, so wise in their own conceit. Pride had made them like blind men to whom no amount of light can restore sight. Such is the evil effect of that vice, that it distinctly prevents a person from seeing his faults and makes him resentful of correction. Even the most solemn warnings of Our Lord make no impression on the heart of the proud. They do not recognise the dangers they are running and the immensity of the loss to which they expose themselves. The love of Our Lord, the beauty of virtue, the magnificence of the reward, leave proud persons cold and unmoved because they cannot understand their sublimity. Now Jesus would like to teach me the science of the saints. It is a grace I can never value enough, but until I banish pride from my heart I too shall not understand, and shall lose the abundant blessings Our Lord has in store for me.

2ND POINT.—Consider how, on the contrary, Our Lord reveals Himself and the things of heaven to the truly humble. Knowing their own nothingness, they esteem all the more highly the favour God grants by allowing them to approach Him. Convinced of their misery and ignorance, they are all eagerness to learn the way to perfection from Him who is infinite Wisdom and Holiness. Besides God loves them, because

they do not deprive Him of His glory, by appropriating it to themselves. Happy those whom God thus enlightens ! In this heavenly wisdom they find security in time of temptation, consolation in their trials and sorrows, strength to overcome the enemies of their soul. Am I eager to secure such precious advantages ?

CLIX. JESUS INVITES ALL THAT SUFFER TO COME TO HIM

Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened : and I will refresh you (Matt. xi. 28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you boundless confidence in His mercy.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus invites all those to come to Him that labour ; that is, all those who are fatigued and wearied out with the daily struggle. What sweet confidence must flow into our hearts from these words, seeing how Our Lord is not only prepared to help us in our needs but how He Himself invites us to come to Him. When we are tempted, when we are annoyed by troublesome passions, when our soul is overwhelmed with anxiety and sorrow, then our dear Lord tells us to come to Him. He knows all our difficulties ; His divine Heart keenly feels for us ; and His infinite wisdom and power is ready to help us.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus invites all who are burdened to come to Him, burdened, that is, with sins. He excludes nobody, however great the malice of his sins may be. He could in all justice reject the sinner who has been so ungrateful to Him ; He could with perfect right punish him severely. But no, instead He invites Him lovingly to come to Him. O wonderful goodness of our Divine Master ! If we have sinned, how consoling it is to know that His Sacred Heart still yearns after us, His unfaithful children ; that He earnestly longs for us to come back to Him, and throw ourselves repentant into the open arms of His mercy.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words : “ And I will refresh you ; ” that is, I will console you, cure you, relieve you of the burden that weighs you down. So when you are tempted and

the fight is hard and wearisome, go to Him who is so wise, so good, so powerful. He has promised to help you, and His promises never fail. If your past sins and the terrible judgments of God frighten you, remember that the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, and who has died for sinners, invites you to come to Him. With His own precious Blood He will wash away the horrible stains that make you unworthy of heaven; by His own bitter sufferings He will atone for the punishments you have deserved. O, may these truths arouse in your heart a boundless confidence in your Saviour and expel all fear and discouragement.

CLX. JESUS TEACHES HUMILITY

Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart : and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light (Matt. xi. 29-30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in you an effective desire of learning from Him to be truly humble.

1ST POINT.—Consider why Jesus insists so much on our learning to be humble, in fact has willed that His whole life from Bethlehem to Calvary should be a striking example of this virtue. It is because He loves us exceedingly, and is anxious to save us from the dangers of pride and to secure for us all the advantages of humility. He is well aware that without humility no other virtue will thrive in our hearts, and that our actions will be barren of merit for heaven; whilst if we are humble, we shall draw down God's abundant blessings on ourselves and our work. On the other hand, He knows how difficult is the practice of humility, and hence He goes before us to give us courage. Let me seriously apply myself to imitate the noble example set me by my Lord and Master. Happy shall I be if I do; if with Him I like to be lowly and unknown; if with Him I patiently accept the humiliations I may meet. Let me examine my dispositions and take effective resolutions.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus: "And you shall find rest to your souls." In fact, our troubles for the most part come from want of true humility: humility keeps us above the difficulties and trials of this life. Why do we

so easily lose our peace of mind? How is it that jealousy, anger, discouragement, anxiety so frequently upset and trouble us? It is because we are not humble. We have here the way taught us by Our Lord Himself to obtain that peace of heart in which true happiness consists.

3RD POINT.—Consider carefully the words: “My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.” Doubtless it is painful to subdue our passions and to conquer our pride, but if we are generous how easy shall we find the service of God. We know this from the example of the saints: even in the midst of the heaviest trials they enjoyed a peace and happiness such as the world cannot give and which nothing could disturb. If we are brave like them we shall have the same experience. Is it not worth while to make efforts towards such a result?

CLXI, THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who also stripped him and having wounded him went away, leaving him half dead. And it chanced, that a certain priest went down the same way: and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him: and seeing him, was moved with compassion: And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out twopence and gave to the host and said: Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee (Luke x. 30-35).

Humbly ask Our Lord to reveal to you the treasures of the love and mercy of His Sacred Heart, inspiring you thus with a greater confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the state to which this traveller has been reduced. All he possessed has been stolen; he lies there stripped and mortally wounded, incapable of helping himself and on the point of perishing altogether. Behold an image of the soul fallen by sin into the power of the devil. Robbed of all the heavenly riches previously acquired, it is struck down

with a mortal wound, and God alone can now save it from eternal damnation. If you have ever committed a mortal sin this is the state to which you were reduced, this the danger you have run. How thankful you ought to be to Him who has rescued you from so terrible a plight !

2ND POINT.—Consider the mercy of the Samaritan. The wounded man is a Jew, one of a race of enemies ; but the Samaritan does not mind. He pities him and takes care of him as if he were his best friend. How vivid a picture of what Jesus has done for us. He too found us miserably wounded along the roadside ; we were His enemies by our actual misdeeds. Still He has shown us mercy as if we were His best friends. He has poured into our wounds the healing oil of His grace, and the wine that gives strength. He has bound up our wounds and brought us to His own home. He has put the treasures of His grace at our disposal, and committed us to the care of His priests to whom He has promised an abundant reward for the services rendered us. How can I ever repay Him for such merciful goodness without which I should have been lost ? Pray that you may never forget His goodness, and that you may prove yourself worthy of it.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the wounded man full of gratitude and confidence puts himself entirely into the hands of his generous benefactor and allows him to do just as he pleases. After the mercy I have experienced it seems only reasonable that I should act likewise, that I should cast myself upon God's kind providence, and accept not only with resignation but with joy and gratitude all its dispositions for the welfare of my soul.

CLXII. MARTHA AND MARY

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain town : and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said : Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve ? Speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her : Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about

many things : But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke x. 38-42).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a deep and practical gratitude towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how all the members of this family were really happy whenever Our Lord paid them a visit. They each owed Him so very much : Mary, first of all, whom He had so mercifully rescued from a life of sin and overwhelmed with graces ; Martha and Lazarus to whom He had restored a beloved sister, repentant and sanctified, after they had long so bitterly deplored her evil ways. No wonder then, they longed to show Him their gratitude by doing all they could for Him. Should not these same feelings be yours when you remember all the mercies of Jesus towards you ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the way in which each of the sisters shows her gratitude towards Our Lord. Martha is working away with all her heart and spares no trouble to give Our Lord a nice reception ; Mary sits humbly at His feet, listening to His every word, and imprinting deep on her heart His holy lessons. I must try to imitate them both. I will do all my work in a spirit of gratefulness towards Him to whom I owe so much, and I will strive to keep myself in His holy presence, liking to remain at His feet that He may speak to me and enkindle in my heart the flames of His divine love.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things : But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.” It is good and necessary for us to work for God, but still we must take care that our work does not absorb our attention so much as to diminish our union with God or make us negligent about our spiritual exercises. This union with God is the best part, since it sanctifies ourselves and our work and helps us to bring forth fruit in abundance. Without God we can do nothing.

CLXIII. JESUS CURES TWO BLIND MEN

And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying Have mercy on us, O Son of David. And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them : Do you believe, that I can do this unto you ? They say to him : Yea, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying : According to your faith, be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus strictly charged them, saying : See that no man know this. But they going out, spread his fame abroad in all that country (Matt. ix. 27-31).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know Him better and love Him more sincerely.

1ST POINT.—Consider the misery of these two blind men. They had to grope their way in obscurity, were constantly exposed to accidents, and always deprived of enjoying the beautiful sights around. No wonder that they implored Jesus so earnestly to cure them. But if their condition was a sad one, much more so is the condition of those that are spiritually blind. Of how many most pure and noble joys their blindness deprives them ; to how many dangers they are ever exposed ; what a cloud of darkness envelops them and prevents their perceiving the love and goodness of God, the horror of sin, their own pitiful state. Thus they are liable to go forward on the wrong path and be lost forever. Thank God you are not totally blind ; yet you may have defects you do not perceive, and which may lead you into danger. God and the things of heaven you ought to see and you do not. Beg earnestly that Jesus may enlighten you.

2ND POINT.—Consider how full of confidence and faith those two blind men were. They had heard of the miracles of Jesus and of His tender compassion towards all that suffer and are in want. They needed no more to convince them that one endowed with such power and so merciful could and would cure them. And as for us, who have received so many proofs of His goodness and love, how great should be our confidence. Whatever our needs, whatever our distress, let us go to Him with that living faith He has a right to expect from us and which pleases Him so much.

3RD POINT.—Consider the gratitude of the two men towards their Benefactor. They spread His fame abroad in all that country. Like them we have received from God light,

—yes, the light of faith, that wondrous gift without which we should live in the spiritual darkness in which so many around us are so miserably plunged. Let us show our gratitude in an ardent zeal for souls ; let us do all we can to bring others to the light by making Jesus known to them.

CLXIV. THE DEVIL ONCE EXPELLED TRIES TO RE-ENTER THE SOUL

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest ; and not finding, he saith : I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself ; and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first (Luke xi. 24-26).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to watch carefully over your thoughts, affections and senses.

1ST POINT.—Consider how eager the devil is to re-enter a soul from which he has been banished. Our Lord describes him as roaming about waterless places, that is, among those souls that are not vivified with the heavenly waters of sanctifying grace ; but he finds no rest : to possess those souls is not enough for him, he wants souls that belong to God. These latter were once beneath his sway, but God's mercy has driven him out of them : he finds them now master of those passions he used to excite in them before ; he finds them pure and adorned with divine grace ; and he is jealous, and in his rage, decides to rob God of His glory and destroy His work. Will you be less determined to preserve intact the heavenly treasures you have acquired, than the devil is intent upon robbing you of them ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the devil like a thief watches his opportunity. He tries to find out the weak side of your character through which he may force an entrance into your heart. Besides, he brings companions to help him in working out his evil plans. You also must strive, as a countermove, to discover your weak points and to strengthen them. Be perpetually on the watch and implore, by fervent prayer, the assistance of God and His angels and saints against so violent and crafty an enemy.

3RD POINT.—Consider the warning of Jesus that if the evil spirit succeeds in re-entering a soul out of which he has been once driven, he establishes his abode in it more firmly than ever, and its condition becomes worse than before. Such a soul will experience greater difficulty than before in conquering and subduing its unruly passions and in re-ekindling its lost fervour in the service of God. Let these considerations persuade you to use energetically and constantly all the means God puts at your disposal to check the evil designs of your cruel enemy.

CLXV. THE NECESSITY FOR GOD'S HELP AGAINST OUR ENEMY

The narrative of the Gospel is the same as in the previous meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to convince you of the necessity of prayer, and to inspire you with a determination to apply yourself to it.

1ST POINT.—Consider the tactics of the enemy. He loses no opportunity of tempting us to mortal, or at least to venial sin; if he fails in this, he tries to diminish our fervour in the service of God. If we are in joy, he tries to make us thoughtless and extravagant, if we meet with success, he tries to make us proud; if sorrow or failure be our lot, he tries to discourage us so that we may abandon watching and prayer. Whatever and howsoever small be our evil tendencies, he seeks to foster them in us, and to make us blind to their growth. He is satisfied with every little victory because it weakens us and makes of us an easier prey. Reflect on this. Think what a dire misfortune it is to fall into the clutches of such an enemy. Then persuade yourself of the necessity of securing the all-powerful help of God by constant and fervent prayer.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a good and powerful protector we have in Our Lord. He has promised that He will never allow us to be tempted above our strength, but will always give us the necessary help to overcome temptations. Yet we must ask Him for this help. It is only by fervent prayer that we shall obtain it and be sure of victory. Ask and you shall receive.

3RD POINT.—Consider that if we bravely resist temptations they become for us an occasion to prove our sincere love for Our Lord, to make reparation for our past infidelities, and to win for ourselves a glorious crown in heaven. Fight we must, but it will be only for a short time, and then how sweet will be the fruits of victory : peace, joy and happiness for all eternity.

CLXVI. A WOMAN PROCLAIMS THE GREATNESS OF MARY

And it came to pass, as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him : Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said : Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it (Luke xi. 27-28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you appreciate your vocation and prove daily more worthy of it.

1ST POINT.—Consider why this woman proclaims the Mother of Jesus blessed. She had recognised the wonderful wisdom of Jesus' teaching ; she had witnessed His miracles ; she had been struck by His supreme power over nature, and over the evil spirits themselves ; she believed Him to be the promised Redeemer of Israel, the hope and glory of the nation, the holy One of God ; and hence she rightly concludes that the Mother of One so wise, so great, so holy has been wonderfully blessed by God in such a Son. We know much better than this woman who Jesus is, and we ought therefore to appreciate more highly the greatness of the Mother of God, and be more grateful for the gifts we have received through her. May these thoughts increase our love, our admiration and respect for Mary the Mother of God and our Mother.

2ND POINT.—Consider in how many ways the vocation of a priest participates of the dignity conferred upon Mary. The priest is elected to bring Jesus to men, that by Him they may be saved ; the priest stands as mediator between the poor sinner and Him who is the source of all wisdom and holiness. Thrice blessed then is he whom God calls to such a dignity. And just as the divine Maternity became for Mary the source of most abundant graces, so the dignity of the priest is the source of the

choicest favours of God. Who are we that God should have exalted us in such a manner? How many reasons we have to bow down before Him in humble and fervent gratitude!

3RD POINT.—Consider the answer of Our Lord: “Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.” Ven. Bede explaining this text says: “Our Lord agrees to the words of this woman. Yea, he answers, blessed is she who became the temporal instrument of the Incarnation, but much more blessed is she because by hearing the word of God and keeping it so faithfully, she made herself as worthy as possible of so high a dignity.” Reflect how these words will also be verified in you. To be God’s priest, the ambassador and representative of Christ on earth, is indeed a wondrous privilege for which you can never thank your Divine Master sufficiently; but it will only prove a state of blessedness if you do your best to correspond to the grace of God by hearing His Word, by letting it sink deep down into your heart, by keeping it and following generously the way of perfection it points out to you.

CLXVII. JESUS PRONOUNCES WOE ON THE PHARISEES

And as he was speaking, a certain Pharisee prayed him that he would dine with him. And he going in, sat down to eat. And the Pharisee began to say, thinking within himself, why he was not washed before dinner. And the Lord said to him: Now you, Pharisees, make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter: but your inside is full of rapine and iniquity. . . Woe to you, Pharisees, because you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues and salutations in the market-place Woe to you, because you are as sepulchres that appear not: and men that walk over are not aware.... Woe to you lawyers also, because you load men with burdens which they cannot bear and you yourselves touch not the packs with one of your fingers (Luke xi. 37-46).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your purpose to serve Him in all humility and sincerity.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus, habitually so gentle and merciful towards sinners, manifests His stern indignation against the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Conclude from this how hateful these two vices are in His sight, and resolve to

keep a vigilant eye on yourself, never allowing these evils to get a hold on your mind or heart, lest you too draw down upon yourself Our Lord's just indignation.

2ND POINT.—Consider in what manner the pride of the Pharisees especially manifested itself, so that you may the more carefully avoid similar faults. They were full of self-conceit, imagining themselves superior to others, always criticising and finding fault with others for trifling failings, while they neglected their own amendment in much more serious matters. They sought to attract the esteem and admiration of others by performing whatever good they did with all the outward show possible. Our Lord repeatedly warned His disciples not to imitate them, for He said:—he that exalts himself shall be humbled, whilst he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Let me take this warning to heart, and resolve that whatever I do, I will do it always for God's glory and not to gain the esteem of men. Let me also never try to put myself above others, but rather live little and hidden with Our Lord.

3RD POINT.—Another cause of Christ's indignation against the Pharisees is their hypocrisy. They made clean the outside of the cup whilst the inside was full of iniquity. Our Lord compares them to sepulchres, beautiful outside but inside full of corruption. Think how foolish and how hateful such a way of acting is in God's sight who reads men's heart and from whom nothing is hidden. Ask yourself what it will avail you to be thought good and holy by men, if you are not really so in God's sight. It would only serve to draw down upon you God's greater anger on the day of judgment. Resolve earnestly to purify and sanctify yourself that your Divine Master may be pleased with you.

CLXVIII. THE PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Let your loins be girt and lamps burning in your hands.... Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching... And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants.... And Peter said to him: Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us, or likewise to all? And the Lord said: Who

(thinkest thou) is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord setteth over his family, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, he will set him over all that he possesseth (Luke xii. 35-44).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to be diligent in the care of, the souls committed to your charge.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ Let your loins be girt and lamps burning in your hands. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.” These words are addressed to all, and by them Jesus exhorts all to be vigilant in His holy service, and to make use of all the means He has put at our disposal to glorify Him and sanctify ourselves. Happy those whom He shall find doing this when He comes. We do not know the hour of His coming. It may be at any time. If He came now, could I give an account of myself? Do I use God’s gifts as He wishes me to do, or have I perchance turned them into occasions of offending Him by my sloth and negligence? Do I use all creatures as far as they serve to glorify God and to sanctify my soul, and abstain from them in as much as they are obstacles to this end? Or on the contrary, is it my line of conduct to accept all that is pleasant and avoid whatever is not?

2ND POINT.—Consider Our Lord’s words to St. Peter who inquires if this parable applies also to the Apostles. From the answer of Jesus we may gather that though it applies to all, it does so more especially to those to whose care He has confided His children, namely His Apostles and His priests. God has bestowed abundant graces on us to help us to fulfil our duties; and if we do so diligently and carefully, that is, if we are found watching over the souls committed to our care, feeding them duly with the word of God, and administering to them in their needs, how pleased will He be! Let us then examine ourselves on this matter and see whether we are doing now what we would wish to have done when the Lord comes.

3RD POINT.—Consider the great reward promised by Jesus to the faithful servant, to the zealous priest, who shall have spent himself in the care of the souls committed to his charge. How worthy of all my efforts is such a reward.

CLXIX. THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

But if that servant shall say in his heart : My Lord is long acoming ; and shall begin to strike the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and to drink and be drunk : the lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not : and shall separate him and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers. And that servant, who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes...Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required (Luke xii. 45-48).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen you in the determination of applying yourself heart and soul to the care of those committed to your charge.

1ST POINT.—Consider the trust the master of the parable had put in his servant. He confided to him the care of his own family, of those that were so very dear to him, and he provided him with all the means necessary to accomplish his task. Fitly may we apply this to every priest. God has shown immense confidence in him by putting in his hands His own most sacred interests, namely, those souls to save whom He has given His very life. God has conferred upon him wondrous powers and abundant graces to enable him to fulfil all the duties of his high office. How guilty then would he be, if he were unfaithful to the trust reposed in him !

2ND POINT.—Consider the picture of the unfaithful servant drawn by Our Lord Himself. Does he merely shirk his duty ? No, besides by his domineering spirit, his anger and violence, his self-indulgence and sensuality, he harms and even causes the destruction of those he had to help and save. And all along he knows perfectly well what His Divine Master expects and wants from him. Our Lord then comes at the hour he expected not. Think of the dismay of the culprit, of the just indignation of His Master, and of the terrible punishment that will follow.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus : “ That servant shall be beaten with many stripes ; for to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.” Woe then to the unfaithful servant by whose negligence and sloth and self-indulgence one of Our Lord’s dear children shall be lost ! He

cannot plead ignorance ; he cannot plead incapacity ; he had at his disposal all the means necessary to fulfil his office worthily. He shall be separated from his fellow-servants that have been faithful, his portion shall be with the unbelievers. Judge of the severity of his punishment by Our Lord's words : "to whomsoever much is given of him much shall be required." Reflect on all this, and if ever love for God grows cold in your heart, recall the terror of God's judgments and cling fast to your duty.

CLXX. THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER

And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For, as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark : and they knew not till the flood came and took them all away : so also shall the coming of the Son of man be... Watch ye therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come. But this know ye, that, if the goodman of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Wherefore be you also ready (Matt. xxiv. 37-44).

Humbly ask Our Lord to let the thought of death inspire you with a purpose to prepare for it by great fervour in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how earnestly and repeatedly Our Lord insists on our being ready for His coming. It is because He knows the terrible results of negligence in this matter, and because loving our souls as intensely as He does, He is most anxious that they should not perish. Yet this business of my salvation is above all my own. If I fail to be ready, if my sins are unatoned for, if I have amassed no merits by the practice of virtue, I alone shall have to bear the consequences. How utterly unwise it would be for me to remain unconcerned about so serious a matter.

2ND POINT.—Consider what Our Lord says about the people living in the days of Noe. They had been warned over and over again, but all to no purpose. Then came the flood, and with it loud regrets, but all too late. How many people act in the same way to-day. Both their faith and their reason

never cease warning them, yet they go on living just as if they had not to die, entirely regardless of their eternal interests which are at stake. Worldly interests and worldly enjoyments absorb all their attention, till they find out, too late, that they have deceived themselves. Let us never forget that we have higher interests to care for than those of this world and be ever mindful of the warning : " Wherefore be ye also ready."

3RD POINT.—Consider how death comes unexpectedly, like a thief, and carries off everything except what we have done for God. Like the wise householder whose example Jesus sets before us, let us be watchful lest sin deprive us of all our merits and death take away the rest, and we thus fall into a state of utter destitution.

CLXXI. THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE

A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard : and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard : Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down therefore. Why cumbereth it the ground ? But he answering, said to him : Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it. And if happily it bear fruit : but if not, then after that thou shall cut it down (Luke xiii 6-9).

• Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to make good use of the time and graces He grants you.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this fig tree planted in the vineyard of Our Lord is an image of yourself. Our Lord has cultivated your soul with the most delicate care, and expects you to yield fruit. The tree planted in that garden bore lots of leaves, perhaps even flowers, but these had never come to maturity and had fallen off before producing fruit. No wonder then the owner was not satisfied with the tree ; he certainly had the right to expect something better. In the same way will Our Lord not be satisfied if, in return for all He has done for you and all the graces He has poured down on you, you yield Him nothing more precious than vain desires and good intentions never carried out. He wants more, namely solid progress in virtue, in humility, charity, piety, the spirit of prayer. Take appropriate resolutions.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the owner of the vineyard comes time after time to visit his tree and to gather the fruit. But he finds none, and at last decides to cut it down. Such is the ultimate fate of those who neglect the graces of God. He is very patient with them ; He gives them chance after chance ; but when He finds that they yield only worthless fruit or none at all, if He does not cut them off altogether from His service, He at least withdraws the special graces necessary for their own sanctification and the success of their work. How terrible a punishment this is for a priest, and how careful he should be never to incur it !

3RD POINT.—Consider how at the prayer of the dresser of the vineyard, one year more, one more chance, is granted to the tree. It shall be dug up all round and manured afresh, but this is the limit of forbearance : if after this it remains barren, its condemnation is already pronounced. Perhaps God has already had much patience with me : yet He has not withdrawn from me, although I have been so very barren of fruits for His glory. How negligent at my prayers, how careless about charity, how full of self-love, self-indulgence and pride ! Perhaps the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, my guardian Angel, or my brethren have till now warded off the punishment I have deserved. But who knows, if for me too the limit has not been fixed and is not near at hand. If I have any reason to fear, let me humble myself before God and promise to do better.

CLXXII. JESUS CURES AN INFIRM WOMAN

And he was teaching in their synagogue on their sabbath. And behold there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years. And she was bowed together : neither could she look upwards at all. Whom when Jesus saw, he called her unto him and said to her : Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her : and immediately she was made straight and glorified God (Luke xiii 10-14).

Humbly ask God to detach your heart from things of the earth and to make it tend to those of heaven.

1ST POINT.—Consider the miserable condition in which the evil spirit had kept this poor woman for eighteen years. She walked quite bent in two, nor could she look upwards at all.

A striking image of what the devil still does spiritually with so many, even with Christians. He keeps them bent down towards the earth, so that they think of and desire nothing but the goods for this world. They try to become rich, to be esteemed by men, to occupy high positions, to enjoy themselves ; and they are incapable of raising their mind and heart to God and heavenly things. Reflect on the utter misery of such a state : how bitter the end of it all will be, when they are forced to open their eyes and perceive how they have deceived themselves. Pray fervently that you may never be reduced to that sad condition.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus moved with compassion called the poor woman to Him that He might cure her and make her walk straight again. He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was cured. We too perhaps are still in many things bent towards the earth and find it very difficult to keep our mind and heart lifted heavenwards. But listen to Jesus ; He calls us also to Him ; and if we go lovingly and confidently, He will surely make us whole as He did this poor afflicted woman.

3RD POINT.—Consider the joy of this woman when cured, and how she glorified God. During the long years previous she had become used to her unhappy condition ; and it was only now, when delivered from her infirmity, that she realised to the full from how great a misery she had escaped, and how great a benefit she had received. Similar is the experience of such as God's grace has detached from the things of the world by which their hearts were once enslaved. It is only when free to soar up to God and things heavenly, that they realise how abject a slavery they have shaken off, and what peace and happiness it brings to be free. Such has been the experience of many saints. With God's grace, I too can obtain this freedom of the children of God.

CLXXIII. THE PARABLE OF THE GUESTS AT THE BANQUET

When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him : And he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee : Give this man place. And then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the

lowest place ; that when he who inviteth thee cometh, he may say to thee : Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee. Because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled : and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke xiv. 8-11).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with the desire of being unknown and considered as nothing.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord over and over again tried to make the Pharisees humble. Their pride was the chief obstacle in the way of their conversion : it prevented their embracing the doctrine of salvation Our Lord was announcing ; it proved for them a source of innumerable sins and infidelities ; it would lead them to the greatest of crimes, to the rejection of the Redeemer and even so far as to make them put Him to death. Jesus knew all this and strove earnestly to combat this vice. Let us conclude from this how much our Divine Master wishes to uproot all pride from the hearts of those consecrated to His service. And He does so because, if it gains entrance into a heart, it at once puts a stop to all advancement in the way of perfection, it makes the person drift farther and farther away from God and may lead to his eternal damnation. How foolish we should be if we did not take this great lesson to heart !

2ND POINT.—Consider how dangerous it is to think ourselves better than others. God's judgments are very different from ours. He knows all : the graces and gifts each has received, the difficulties each has had to encounter, the efforts each has put forth, the interior acts of virtue each has performed. These are the data from which He judges our worth. And we, what have we to judge by beyond the exterior actions of men ? How sadly we may be mistaken then, when we imagine ourselves better than our neighbours ! What a shame it will be for us on the day of judgment when we see those whom we despised far above us in God's esteem !

3RD POINT.—Consider how wise and profitable it is to put ourselves below all others in our own estimation, to seek to remain unknown and considered as nothing. Whosoever does so lives superior to all humiliation and, thus set free from the usual cause of bitter feelings and troubles of mind, enjoys profound peace and happiness. Besides such a one draws down upon himself God's abundant blessings ; for God loves to

manifest Himself to the humble, to speak to their hearts, to shower down favours upon them. Ought we not firmly to resolve to practise, with the utmost generosity, a virtue so highly esteemed and richly rewarded by God Himself?

CLXXIV. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath an hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing? And coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? (Luke xv. 1-7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to realise His great mercy towards you, and to inspire you with great mercy towards sinners and zeal for their salvation.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this parable of the lost sheep applies to you. By baptism you were received into the flock of the Good Shepherd: but later you strayed far from Him, and nothing remained to you but to perish miserably, if Jesus had not sought you. And Jesus did seek you. He came down from heaven to save you from perdition, and finding you a prey to your passions, sunk deep in the horrible abyss into which sin had plunged you and where you were sure to perish, what did He not do to save you? Did He not pierce with cruel wounds His hands and feet? Did He not give His life for you? And then remember how He carried you on His shoulders, that is, sustained you by His powerful grace, and brought you home with Him that you might be His once more. And how He rejoiced with His holy Mother, His angels and saints because you were found again.

2ND POINT.—Consider how in this parable Jesus sets us a beautiful example of what we should do for poor sinners. See how He confounds the pride of the Pharisees who despised sinners and kept them at a distance; take care not to imitate these hypocrites by using scornful words or displaying a want

of mercy to those who have gone astray. The Good Shepherd does not act in this way. He is all mercy. His thoughts are not thoughts of anger but of compassion, and are all directed to rescuing the sheep that is lost. He spares Himself no trouble, no suffering, nay, He gives His very life for it. And once He has found it, how full of pity He shows Himself for its weakness, bearing it home on His shoulders. Behold what Jesus expects from him to whom He has confided the souls He loves so much.

CLXXV. THE PRODIGAL SON. HE LEAVES THE PATERNAL HOME.

A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance, living riotously (Luke xv. 11-13).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand the wickedness of mortal sin and to increase your horror of it.

1ST POINT.—Consider this young man leaving his father's home. How happy he had been there: nothing was wanting to him; his father was a wealthy man who loved his children fondly and gave them in abundance whatever they needed. He had brought them up with loving care, their happiness was his own, and each day he gave them new proofs of his love. He gathered riches for them, so that later on they might be wealthy. As long as the young man had kept his heart unsullied, he had been very happy indeed, but when he allowed the desire of sensual pleasure and the spirit of independence to get the better of him, blinded by his passions, he grew impatient of the kind yet firm paternal authority and recklessly threw up all his former happiness. So many of the privileged children of God have done the same and forfeited everything in the pursuit of their own satisfaction. And if I have ever committed a mortal sin, this has been my own story.

2ND POINT.—Consider the black ingratitude of this young man towards his father from whom he had received such love and such benefits. Blinded by passion the youth

does not mind in the least how deeply he wounds his father's heart. Again how true an image of the sinner who, forgetting all that he owes to God, shamefully abandons Him to follow his own disorderly desires. If I have ever acted in this manner how much reason I have to repent and to humble myself before Him whom I have thus cruelly offended !

3RD POINT.—Consider the terrible harm this young man brought upon himself. He lost the loving care of his father, and the quiet but true happiness of his home. The inheritance his father had given him was soon all squandered and utter degradation followed. Think how all this is verified but in a much more terrible manner in those who give themselves up to sin. They lose God and the prospect of eternal happiness, they lose God's grace and the peace of heart He gives to His children ; they fall into the worst degradation possible for man, namely, from being children of God to become the slaves of the devil. Meditate on all this and excite in your heart true repentance for past sins and a firm purpose of sinning no more.

CLXXVI. THE PRODIGAL SON FALLS INTO ABJECT MISERY

And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country : and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said : How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger ! (Luke xv. 14-17).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your horror and fear of sin and to help you to mortify your disorderly inclinations.

1ST POINT.—Consider how low this young man had fallen. His inheritance had all been lost in living riotously, and so extreme was his destitution, that he, the son of a wealthy family, was obliged to hire himself to a farmer who sent him to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. Behold here the picture Our Lord Himself has drawn of the state of degradation

and utter misery of the sinner who has abandoned his Heavenly Father to follow his passions. After having thrown away the precious graces with which God had enriched him, he does not even find the sort of happiness he had desired ; on the contrary, a great famine comes on the land, his heart is empty ; to satisfy its cravings, he had given himself to the devil, who now sends him to feed the swine, that is, drags him deeper and deeper into infamy ; he wishes for the food of the swine, he tries to find satisfaction in indulging his passions, but even that satisfaction is not granted him. Alas, how many sinners have experienced this ! May I never do so. Let me therefore resolve to resist temptations from the beginning and to mortify generously all inordinate affections.

2ND POINT.—Consider the bitter regrets of the prodigal in the midst of his misery. He remembers the happy years passed at home and the abundance which he enjoyed. He compares his former honourable condition with the degraded state to which his folly has reduced him. He, the beloved son of a prince, is now the despised hireling of a cruel master. How far better off than himself are the lowest servants in his father's house ! How kindly they are treated, how well they are fed ; while he meets with harsh treatment and utter want. If you know of a priest who has fallen away from His God, you have here the image of the cruel remorse and disappointment, and the vain hankering after happiness he surely experiences. How did he come to such misery ? One passion unsubdued was the cause of all. How necessary it is to watch and to pray !

CLXXVII. THE PRODIGAL SON REPENTS

And returning to himself, he said : How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger ! I will arise and will go to my father and say to him : Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up, he came to his father (Luke xv. 17-20).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you true repentance for your sins and the grace to avoid sin in future.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the prodigal son, haunted by the thought of the horrible misery to which he had brought

himself, and of all the happiness he had lost by his own wickedness ; and moved, on the other hand, by the remembrance of the loving father he had so deeply grieved, resolved to go back and to atone for his misdeeds. If you have ever imitated the prodigal, although God has forgiven you, should not the thought of the degradation to which you then brought yourself, and of the ingratitude returned to the best of fathers, be for you also a standing reason for repentance, an abiding cause for atonement ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the resolutions the prodigal son takes in order to make up as much as he can for the guilt he has incurred. I will arise and will go to my father. I will break away from that bondage into which I have fallen. I will humbly recognise my wrong-doing and my ingratitude. I will say to him : “ Make me as one of thy hired servants. To be admitted into the lowest place of your household is all I desire : I am not worthy to be called thy son.” When I reflect on my own sins, their remembrance ought to excite similar feelings in my heart. I too should say : “ I will arise and go to my Father,” with entire confidence in His infinite mercy ; yet I should always remember how guilty I have been and then humble myself and be ready to take the last place in His house. Even this I should consider as a mercy of which I am not worthy.

3RD POINT.—Consider these words of the parable : “ And rising up, he came to his father.” His resolution was a genuine one : not a moment did he waver in its execution. Doubtless it must have been hard to humble himself in that manner, but he did not hesitate. In the same way, I also should not rest satisfied with acknowledging that I deserve to be humbled, but accept willingly those humiliations it may please God to send me. Nay more, remembering how often and how grievously perhaps I have offended Him, I should, out of a wish to atone, eagerly seize the opportunities I meet of humbling myself before God and man.

CLXXVIII. THE PRODIGAL SON'S RECEPTION. BY HIS FATHER

And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him : Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants : Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him : and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it : and let us eat and make merry : because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found (Luke xv. 20-24).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you realise better His great mercy and to fill your heart with gratitude.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this good father in spite of his son's ingratitude and bad conduct does not cease to think of him, to yearn after him, and to be ready to forgive him. Compare your way of acting towards your Heavenly Father with that of the prodigal, and the merciful love of God towards you with the love of that father for his ungrateful child. If you have ever committed a mortal sin, how much greater has your ingratitude been and how much greater God's mercy towards you. Admire the wondrous love that made your Heavenly Father yearn after your return that He might pardon you and receive you once more among His children.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the father receives his repentant boy. He is filled with compassion at his miserable state ; he runs towards him, falls on his neck and kisses him. Not only does he not utter one word of reproach but he restores him to favour as before, supplies him with whatever he needs and, full of joy at the return of his child, he orders a great feast to be got ready. And has not God acted towards you in the same way when you came back to Him humble and repentant ? He had no blame, no reproaches for you, but only new and greater favours. How worthy then is this merciful Father of your admiration, your love and your gratitude !

3RD POINT.—Consider how so much mercy must have gone straight to the heart of the repentant prodigal. Each new proof of his father's love added a pang to the sorrow he felt for what he had done, and made him resolve more firmly never again to

grieve so good a father and to do all in his power to make up for his past ingratitude. Ought not God's mercy towards you, and the new proofs He daily gives you of His love, to excite a similar resolve in your heart ?

CLXXIX. THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD

There was a certain rich man who had a steward : and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said to him : How is it that I hear this of thee ? Give an account of thy stewardship : for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself : What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship ? To dig I am not able ; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship they may receive me into their houses. (Then he called everyone of his lord's debtors, and cancelled a large part of their debt). And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely : for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light (Luke xvi. 1-8).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart the desire to atone for your past sins.

1ST POINT.—Consider that just as the rich man had confided the administration of his goods to a steward, so God has confided to you, that you may use them for His glory, your body with its senses, your soul with its faculties and the innumerable graces you have enjoyed during your life-time. One day you shall have to give an account of your stewardship ; if you have wasted God's gifts or, still worse, made a bad use of them, you shall have to answer for your conduct, and the consequences will be terrible.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this steward on being discovered understood that he had incurred the just anger of his employer and was liable to severe punishment. He knew that he could conceal his misdeeds no further, he could not excuse them, nor yet escape giving an account of his management. He foresaw that extreme misery would follow and at once looked out for a means to avoid the consequences of his dishonesty. If you have ever abused of God's gifts or wantonly

squandered His precious graces, you cannot escape giving an account of your doings. God may ask it any day. Hence is it not high time to look out anxiously for the means God in His mercy puts at your disposal to cancel the dire consequences of the sins and negligences you have been guilty of ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord praises the unjust steward not for his injustice, but for his foresight in providing for himself. In this point Our Lord would have us imitate the unfaithful steward, namely, in diligently using the means we have of securing a merciful judgment. These means among others are humble repentance, patient acceptance of the crosses God sends us, mercy and charity towards those that offend us, generous self-devotedness in God's service. How happy shall I be if on the day of judgment I have thus secured a merciful sentence !

CLXXX. THE PARABLE OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. And no one did give him : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died : and he was buried in hell (Luke xvi. 19-22).

Humbly ask Our Lord to detach your heart from things of this world, and to make it intent upon securing a happy eternity.

1ST POINT.—Consider the two persons Jesus presents to us in this parable. The one has all the world can wish for : plenty of money, rich attire, feasting and banqueting day after day, numerous servants and friends. The other seems to live only to suffer : he has to endure all the hardships of poverty, he is covered with sores, despised and abandoned with no other friends than some dogs that come to lick his wounds. In the judgment of the world the first is a lucky man, the second a miserable wretch. But Our Lord judges differently, and wants to make

us understand that all the goods and pleasures of this world pass very quickly and when death comes, nothing remains of them. What then do they avail those who in seeking and possessing them lose their souls? On the other hand, the sufferings of this life, however intense, also quickly pass away; and for those who have borne them bravely, who have sanctified them, death changes them into eternal bliss. Our Lord is the Eternal Wisdom and I know for sure that His judgment is the right one. Hence I am only deceiving myself if I so attach my heart to the fleeting goods of this world as to neglect and expose my salvation.

2ND POINT.—Consider how when Lazarus died, the angels carried him to the bosom of Abraham. All his troubles were over for ever, and in their stead had begun a life of joy and happiness that will never end. How happy shall we too be if after the example of this poor beggar we have patiently and lovingly embraced our daily cross. At the hour of death this will be one of the things that will procure us the greatest peace and consolation. If then we have to endure temptations, if we have to struggle hard against our passions, if we suffer from bodily miseries or privations, if spiritual aridity and desolation be our lot, let us remember that it will all be soon over, and that if we sanctify these trials, we shall reap an abundant reward.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the rich man also died and was buried in hell. Supposing the rich man had been allowed to begin life again in this world, would he not have been willing to endure all that Lazarus had endured to escape from those eternal punishments? What were now to him all those riches, those pleasures, those honours he had enjoyed? How gladly would he have foregone them all, if only he could secure a share in the happiness of that poor beggar he had despised. Let us act wisely in time so as to escape bitter regrets that come too late.

CLXXXI. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE RICH MAN

And the rich man also died : and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom : and he cried and said : Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue : for I

am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him : Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither (Luke xvi. 22-26).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your determination to forsake all things that might endanger your eternal salvation.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the first punishment of the wicked rich man in hell was the thought of the immense happiness he had forfeited for the pleasures and self-indulgence of a few years. How he now bewailed his folly ! O that he could begin again ! With what bitterness he now cursed those pleasures, those honours, that wealth, those friends that had brought him to this.

2ND POINT.—Consider how his second punishment is to dwell in that unquenchable fire, created to avenge the outraged rights of God ; and that without any relief, no, not even as much as a drop of water to cool his tongue. What were the greatest of his pleasures on earth that they could induce him to expose himself to such torments ? How very vile they now seemed to him, and yet he had made them the one object of his desires. How gladly would he have sacrificed them all now, to escape from that fire ! But he has had his choice ; he despised God's warnings ; it is now too late. We too must choose ; in the moment of temptation let us remember this lesson.

3RD POINT.—Consider the third punishment of this wicked man : the eternal separation from God and all that could make him happy. A great chaos which no one could pass was fixed between him and the joys of heaven. He was never to escape those torments, never to receive the slightest consolation, ever to burn, ever to despair, ever to curse his folly, as long as God would be God. If only this thought of eternity could sink deep into our hearts, it would keep us faithful in spite of all the allurements of the world and the flesh, and the temptations of the devil.

CLXXXII. THE CURE OF THE TEN LEPERS

And as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying : Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Whom when he saw, he said : Go, shew yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks. And this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said : Were not ten made clean ? And where are the nine ? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger (Luke xvii. 12-18).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with feelings of gratitude for his benefits.

1ST POINT.—Consider how these poor lepers could not approach Jesus but called for mercy from a distance. Jesus however came near them to cure them. If we have ever sinned grievously, the horrible state of our souls would have precluded us for ever from approaching God again, if He in His infinite mercy had not pitied us and by His grace come first to us. How little perhaps we think of this, and yet ought we not to shudder at the danger to which we have exposed ourselves ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the way in which Our Lord effects the cure of these lepers : He sends them to shew themselves to the priests. Reflect how Jesus does the same thing still to cleanse our souls from sin, of which leprosy is an image. Surely it is a very easy means to be relieved of so great an evil, and we can never thank God enough for this wonderful sacrament of penance in which by a humble and sorrowful acknowledgment of our sins we are purified of them.

3RD POINT.—Consider how of the ten men cured by Jesus only one shows himself grateful, and how just is Our Lord's displeasure at this want of gratitude for so great a benefit. Remember that to be cleansed from sin is a favour incomparably surpassing that received by those lepers. Be grateful for it and thus you will not deserve the reproaches of your Divine Master.

CLXXXIII. THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage: and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come ye to the marriage. But they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry: and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burnt their city (Matt. xxii. 2-7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to answer faithfully His call to perfection.

1ST POINT.—Although this parable was directly meant as a warning for the princes of the Jews who refused to listen to the Divine Master, we can easily and rightly apply it to ourselves. God by making us His priests calls us to a higher union with Him, a union to be brought to perfection in the eternal happiness of heaven. In doing so He bestows upon us a great honour and a great favour. To refuse or neglect a personal invitation of an earthly king is to offer him an insult. What must we then think of our way of acting when we neglect the invitation of Our Lord and God; when we treat with indifference the love with which God's Infinite Majesty deigns to call us His poor little creatures to His intimate friendship? What an honour this invitation should be for us! What advantages we would derive from such a union with Him who is the source of all good! How much we shall lose if we do not respond to Our Lord's loving advances!

2ND POINT.—Consider the way those acted that were invited by the king to his banquet. Their lord, in his kindness, reminds them again and again of the good things he has prepared for them; but they do not care; they offer vain excuses, and some even go so far as to ill-treat the king's servants and to kill them. Who can understand such a manner of acting? Yet so many Christians do no better, and perhaps we are in the number. God invites us over and over again in the instructions we hear, in our spiritual readings, in our meditations; He

reminds us of all the blessings and the happiness He has in store for us, and perhaps we too have been seeking flimsy pretexts not to answer His invitation. We have given our hearts to the things of the world, we have turned against Him who is so good to us, and even perhaps killed Him in our hearts by mortal sin. Think how ungratefully, how wickedly, how outrageously we have behaved towards the Divine Majesty.

3RD POINT.—Consider the just wrath of the king against those wicked subjects and the terrible punishment he inflicted on them. How much more deserving of wrath and punishment have we been in offending in a similar manner not an earthly sovereign but the supreme Lord of heaven and earth.

CLXXXIV. THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS HIS SICKNESS AND DEATH

Now there was a certain man sick, named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and of Martha her sister...His sisters therefore sent to him, saying : Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And Jesus hearing it, said to them : This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God : that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he still remained in the same place two days (John xi. 1-6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to put yourself entirely into the hands of Divine Providence.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord sends a heavy trial to the family He so dearly loves. His intention in doing so is a most loving one : namely that whilst God is glorified in them, this trial may become for them a source of extraordinary graces. Thus God sometimes allows trials to befall us : sickness, failure, temptations, spiritual aridity and anxieties of mind. When this happens we should always remember that God has our greater spiritual welfare in view. These trials, accepted in the proper spirit, will purify our hearts, detach them from things of this earth, raise them constantly heavenwards, and by furnishing us with occasions of glorifying God, become a source of great merits for heaven. How foolish then it would be to grumble at these visitations of God, to be discouraged on their account, or to lose confidence in God's Providence, so wise, so loving, so powerful.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Lazarus's sisters in their affliction turned to Jesus. They knew His love for them, His wisdom and His power. See how simply and with absolute confidence they put everything into His hands: "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." They felt sure that Jesus would do what was best for them. Do I show my absolute confidence in Our Lord in this way?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus puts off granting the request of the two holy sisters. Is it that He loves them little? Not at all but He intends to help them in an extraordinary way, to give them a signal proof of His affection, and by so doing to attach them still more to Himself. In the same way, when our prayers are not heard at once, when, notwithstanding our supplications, our trials grow severer, we ought not to think that God has abandoned us but trust entirely in His merciful Providence which in due time will set everything right once more.

CLXXXV. THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS JESUS COMES TO BETHANIA

Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly : Lazarus is dead. And I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe. But, let us go to him...Jesus therefore came : and found that he had been four days already in the grave...And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet him : but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus : Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith to her : Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him : I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her : I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live ; and everyone that liveth and believeth in me shall not die forever. Believest thou this ? She saith to him : Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world. And when she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying : The master is come and calleth for thee...When Mary therefore was come

where Jesus was, seeing him, she fell down at his feet and saith to him : Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died (John xi. 14-32).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to trust in Him in all your afflictions.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus puts off going to Bethania till, humanly speaking, there is no possible hope of doing anything for Lazarus. He desires to give the two sisters and the Apostles an irrefutable proof of His divine power, so as to inspire them with that unshakable confidence in Him, that they will stand so much in need of in the midst of their trials. Must this not convince me never to allow my confidence in God to waver, even when, humanly speaking, everything seems lost ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how, as soon as Martha and Mary hear that Jesus has come, they leave those who had gathered to console them, and go to Jesus for comfort and consolation. If we understood more vividly how good and merciful the Sacred Heart is, how Jesus sympathises with all our sorrows, how powerful and ready He is to help and console us, we too, despising the comfort of creatures which is often so empty, would go to Him and pour out all our troubles into the Heart of that best of all friends.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Martha and Mary to Jesus. What faith and unwavering confidence they display, and at the same time what entire submission to God's holy will, than which they knew nothing better. On intimate terms with Jesus as they were, it was only to be expected that they should act in that manner. But should I not say the same for myself ? How is it then that I am so quickly disheartened and put out and perhaps even dissatisfied with God's ways of disposing events ?

CLXXXVI. THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping...groaned in the spirit and troubled himself, and said : Where have you laid him ? They say to him : Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said : Behold how he loved him...Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the sepulchre. Now it was a cave ; and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith : Take away

the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him : Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days. Jesus saith to her : Did I not say to thee that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God ? They took therefore the stone away. And Jesus lifting up his eyes, said : Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always ; but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice : Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands. And his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them : Loose him and let him go. Many of the Jews...who had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him (John xi. 33-45).

Humbly ask Our Lord to reveal to you the treasures of mercy contained in His Sacred Heart, and to inspire you with a great confidence towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how much Jesus sympathises with the sisters in their affliction, so as even to weep with them. In the same way when He sends us some trial for our good, He shares in our sufferings. Just as a mother who would bring her child to the doctor to be operated feels most keenly the pain her little one has to endure and does all she can to alleviate it, so our good Lord while allowing us to suffer, does all He can to help us to bear up bravely. Let us not hesitate to go to Him in our sufferings. He invites us, and we shall surely find in Him comfort and assistance.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Jews seeing Jesus weep, said among themselves : “ See how he loved him.” But if the tears of Jesus shed over Lazarus were a proof of His love, what ought I to think of the blood He shed for me ? Truly He could give no greater proof of His love. What shall I do in return ? I shall strive to realise how much He has devoted Himself for my eternal salvation, and in future take all His interests to heart and console Him by my fervour for the ingratitude of men.

3RD POINT.—Consider the almighty power of Jesus which rules over life and death. His power can do anything for me, can help me out of every difficulty, can rescue me from any danger. Hence if I remain united to Him, if I have recourse to Him in my misery and weakness I need have nothing to fear.

CLXXXVII. THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER

And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke xviii. 1).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may better understand the excellence and necessity of prayer, and that you may develop a genuine spirit of prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great thing it is to pray, and what a great favour to be allowed to do so. What are we compared with the Infinite Majesty and Holiness of God? Poor and sinful creatures, and still we are allowed not only to come near to God whenever we like, but also to speak to Him as a friend to his friend, as a child to its loving father. Mary and the saints too are so high above us, and still we may converse familiarly with them. If it is an honour to be admitted to intimate conversation with the great ones of this world, how great an honour must we deem it to converse with the princes, and Queen of Heaven, nay with God Himself! How eagerly we should avail ourselves of this privilege!

2ND POINT.—Consider the advantages we derive from intercourse with God and His saints. If frequent converse with the wise and learned, and constant intercourse with men of noble character makes us advance in knowledge, and raises our thoughts and feelings to higher levels, what must be the effects on our soul of entertaining ourselves with God, the source of all wisdom and holiness. Besides, prayer may be truly called ‘the key of God’s treasures’; treasures of heavenly wisdom, of strength and consolation, treasures of grace with which to sanctify ourselves. We know the wonderful promises Our Lord has made about the efficacy of prayer, and it would be unpardonable folly and gross ingratitude towards our all-merciful God were we to treat lightly the advantages offered us.

3RD POINT.—Consider that the work God has confided to us will bear no fruit unless it be blessed by Him. “He who lives in me and I in him,” says Jesus, “shall bear much fruit.” Consequently if we want our work to prosper for the glory of our Divine Master and the salvation of souls, we ought to draw closer and closer to God by a true spirit of prayer. From whom indeed shall we obtain more prudent advice or derive greater strength to conquer difficulties than from Him who is the giver of all good gifts?

CLXXXVIII. THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke xviii. 1).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to cultivate the spirit of prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider how necessary for us is continual prayer. We have a most cruel and crafty enemy, one who never slackens in his endeavours to ruin us eternally. Besides, we must acknowledge ourselves weak, easily deceived, wanting in courage, and hence continually in urgent need of God's most powerful protection. In a worldly affair of any importance we recognise the need of good advice and protection; and shall we in an affair of supreme moment, namely our soul's salvation and sanctification, fail to see the great need we are in of God's help so generously offered us?

2ND POINT.—Consider how powerful evil is in the world; how numerous and attractive the means at its disposal to withdraw men from God and to ruin them. By ourselves, we are powerless against this terrible enemy of God's dearest interests. Still we must safeguard His rights, and to enable us to do so God is our only hope; He alone can make us conquer, hence our duty demands that we should seek in prayer the assistance of which we are so much in need.

3RD POINT.—Consider the warning Jesus gives us in connection with prayer: that we should never cease praying. The devil our enemy knows the power of prayer, and hence he puts forth every effort to make us forsake this powerful means of sanctification. If he cannot succeed in persuading us to abandon it altogether, he will at least try to make us slothful or negligent or disrespectful at prayer, so as to lessen or destroy its efficacy. Since we know this, we should not allow ourselves to be deceived by our enemy.

CLXXXIX. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest

of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week : I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven ; but struck his breast, saying : O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other : because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled : and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke xviii. 10-14).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to conquer all pride and to become truly humble of heart.

1ST POINT.—Consider the prayer of the Pharisee. It is more an insult to God than a prayer. The man's heart is full of pride ; he does not see how much he is in need of God's mercy, and so he asks for nothing ; pride blinds him to his own misery. He openly boasts of the little external virtue he has been practising, and in this way spoils even that. He thinks a great deal of himself, not only fancying himself superior to others but even despising them and judging rashly and uncharitably. Think of the value of such a prayer in God's sight, and reflect how pride spoils our best actions. It is an inexhaustible source of sins, especially against charity, the virtue most dear to God ; it prevents the sinner from begging for that mercy of which he stands so much in need and turns God's blessings away from him. Do I not in some measure imitate the Pharisee ? Am I not blind to my own shortcomings ? Do I not criticize and blame others because I think myself better than them ? Do I not lose the merits of the little good I do by boasting of it ? If I detect failings on these points, let me acknowledge how much harm pride does my soul and resolve firmly to root out the evil from my heart.

2ND POINT.—Consider the prayer of the poor Publican. Perhaps he is a great sinner ; if so, at least he humbly recognises it before God and men. He fully acknowledges his need of God's mercy and humbly implores it. The scornful words of the Pharisee do not trouble him, for he accepts humiliation as his due. And God who loves to exalt the humble quickly forgives him, and he goes home justified. Wonderful indeed is the power of humility on the Heart of Our Lord ! Happy shall I be if I realise this and strive after the acquirement of this beautiful virtue ! Let me recognise my defects and my sins and while asking pardon for them accept, with a good heart, the humiliations it may please God to send me.

CXC. JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN

Then were little children presented to him, that he should impose hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said to them : Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to me : for the kingdom of heaven is for such (Matt. xix. 13-14).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him better and to love and imitate Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider Our Lord surrounded by little children. He is the infinite Majesty, the Almighty, the infinitely wise Ruler of heaven and earth : yet see how He makes Himself little with the little ones, listens to their innocent prattle, talks to them in the simple language which they can understand, takes pleasure in their childish joys and soothes their little sorrows. Try to learn from this great example to be meek and humble of heart, and to love the children God has committed to your keeping.

2ND POINT.—Consider what it is that draws the loving Heart of Jesus towards these little ones. It is their innocence, their purity : sin has not as yet disfigured in them the image of God. It is their child-like simplicity : pride and deceitfulness have not yet spoilt them. The more we shall resemble children in these points, the dearer also shall we be to Jesus. Happy those who have preserved their baptismal innocence. No effort, no care can be excessive when we are guarding such a treasure. And if ever you have lost this inestimable gift by mortal sin, thank God for having restored it to you together with His love, and take every precaution against losing it again.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ The kingdom of heaven is for such.” In a heart that is pure and simple God can reign supreme, but not in a heart given to sin or which is insincere and deceitful. Now, there can be nothing better than that God should thus reign over us : He will be our all-powerful protector against our enemies ; He will enrich us with many graces ; He will sanctify us and make us worthy of heaven. Resolve then firmly to apply yourself to the acquirement of this childlike purity and simplicity of heart that will bring you nearer and nearer to God and draw down His abundant blessings upon you.

CXCI. THE ENQUIRY OF THE YOUNG MAN

Behold one came and said to him : Good master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting ? Who said to him : ...if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments... The young man saith to him : all these have I kept from my youth.--And Jesus looking on him, loved him and said to him : One thing is wanting unto thee. Go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor : and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful : for he had great possessions. And Jesus looking round about, saith to his disciples : How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. xix. 16 20, Mark x. 21-23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart an intense desire of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this young man, the favourite of fortune, realised that all the good things of this world quickly pass away, and are perfectly useless except in as much as they help us to gain eternal life. I too understand and believe this, but do I live up to my convictions by being eager to learn from Our Lord what I should do to please Him and to win the heavenly crown ? If I sincerely wish to be instructed, Jesus will enlighten me in my meditations and spiritual readings. Let me resolve to attend to and follow out His instructions.

2ND POINT.—Consider the answer of Our Lord : “if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” This is then the first thing I must do. If I wish to save my soul I must keep away from sin. No other way is secure ; and unless I do this, I expose myself to eternal perdition. People are very careful not to expose themselves to temporal losses ; how much more careful should I be not to risk my eternal happiness.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of this young man : “Master, all these have I kept from my youth.” Happy am I if I can give this testimony of myself, if I have never stained my baptismal innocence with mortal sin. And what a great consolation it will be for me at my last moments if I have preserved this treasure ; or at least, if after having obtained pardon for my sins, I observe God’s commandments faithfully to the end !

CXCII. THE CALL OF JESUS

The narrative of the Gospel is the same as in the previous meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to detach your heart from whatever prevents your following Him unreservedly.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus loved this young man because of his purity of heart, and wished to draw him nearer to Himself. To be called to a life of higher perfection and to closer union with God is surely a great grace. When an earthly king attaches to his intimate service one of his subjects and makes a friend and confidant of him who would have been glad to serve him in any inferior capacity, we consider this a rare favour indeed. The one who receives such a favour will surely appreciate it greatly and do his best to render himself worthy of it and not to lose it. How much more should I appreciate God's love for me and the favour He has conferred on me when He made me His priest ! Perhaps unlike this young man, I have often been unfaithful to God. This is only a reason the more to admire God's loving generosity towards me and to do all I can with His help to make myself more and more worthy of my vocation. Let me do so by generous efforts to attain perfection.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this young man on hearing the conditions required to follow Our Lord, sorrowfully withdrew. He could not bring himself to renounce everything to follow Jesus. Perhaps many, like him, have shrunk from the sacrifice which God demanded of them and thus lost the crown of sanctity which God had destined for them. As for myself, if I am determined to advance on that way of perfection to which I am called, I must of necessity detach my heart from the things of this world. Till now perhaps, some disorderly affection prevents my devoting myself entirely to God's service ; if so, let me remember how much I lose by it, how one day death will deprive me of everything to which I may have attached myself, while now by renouncing it freely I can gain such abundant merits.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus : " how hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven." The same is true of those that attach their hearts to the honours, the esteem, the pleasures of this world. How difficult it becomes

for them to do the holy will of God in all things, and to remain faithful to him ! If I allow any such attachment to abide and to grow in my heart, how much harm it will surely do me, by preventing me from sanctifying myself. It may even become a real danger to my eternal salvation ; shall I then let anything come between me and my God ?

CXCIII. THE REWARD FOR FOLLOWING JESUS

Then Peter said : Behold, we have left all things and have followed thee. Who said to them : Amen, I say to you, there is no man that hath left home or parents or brethren or wife or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting (Luke xviii. 28-30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you the courage of offering generously any sacrifice He asks of you.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of St. Peter :—Behold we have left all things and have followed thee. The Apostles were poor fishermen and had little to leave ; but they had left all they possessed to follow their Divine Master and to devote themselves entirely to His service. Knowing how generous Jesus is in rewarding, they reasonably expected a great reward from Him. What joy will be ours if we too can say at the last day to Our Lord : we have left all things. The life of a priest is full of occasions of making some sacrifice to God, and if we make them unstintedly we may expect a great reward. Let us not be of those who give to God only after having satisfied themselves, or of those from whose offering self-love robs a part. By this way of acting we would lose a great deal, since in God's ordinary providence His choicest gifts are only for the generous.

2ND POINT.—Consider the rich reward Jesus promises to those who leave all for Him. First of all is that eternal reward which is so great that no man can conceive it. Who would refuse to part with a few coppers, even if it were to inconvenience him, when he knows that by doing so, he would secure a large fortune ? Besides this, even on earth we shall obtain a peace and happiness such as the world cannot give in

return for all we have given up for God's sake, if in truth we do so ungrudgingly. These considerations should surely encourage us and urge us on to be truly generous in the fulfilment of our duties.

3RD POINT.—Consider how at the moment of death, those who have attached their hearts to the things of this world shall have to forsake them all. What we now abandon for God's glory, to enable us to follow and work for our Master, is not lost, but exchanged for heavenly treasures which death cannot take away. Let us then be ready to make sacrifices.

CXCIV. THE WORKMEN IN THE VINEYARD

The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder who went out (at different hours of the day) to hire labourers into his vineyard ... About the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he saith to them : Why stand you here all the day idle ? They say to him : Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them : Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward : Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more : and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, saying : These last have worked but one hour : and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them : Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a penny ? Take what is thine and go thy way. I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or is it not lawful for me to do what I will ? (Matt. xx, 1-15).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a great fervour in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord has called you to work in His vineyard. He had no need of your services ; He could have found many others better than you ; yet He wished in His mercy to give you a reward beyond all your deserts. If you are wise you will take up your work with joy and eagerness. Perhaps you too were found idling ; up till now you

have perhaps done little for your Divine Master, perhaps lost your time in seeking your own satisfaction. If so, make really generous efforts for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Master when evening had come called his workmen to settle accounts with them. For us too the evening will come, the close of our lives when the time for work will be over. With what confidence shall we meet this hour, if we have done our best for God, and how joyfully shall we answer the call which bids us come to Him to receive the reward He has promised to His faithful servants !

3RD POINT.—Consider how those who had come late into the vineyard were paid the same amount as the others. Of course this was an act of generosity, which the Master of the vineyard could perform without doing any injustice to the others. In the same way God may bestow His grace upon those who have not served Him from the beginning, and thus help them to obtain the crown of sanctity. Perhaps I have sinned formerly ; how consoling then it is to think that if from now I take advantage of the graces given me, I can still hope for a home among the saints. Let this thought encourage me to pray fervently and to do my work to the best of my power.

CXCV. THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE

Jesus had just foretold to His Apostles most clearly His passion and death on the cross : *Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him. Who said to her : What wilt thou ? She saith to him : Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. And Jesus answering, said : You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink ? They say to him : We can. He saith to them : My chalice indeed you shall drink ; but to sit on my right or left hand is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father (Matt. x.v. 20-23).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand what He expects from you, and to inspire you with a firm purpose of working to attain it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Apostles even after so long a training in the school of Our Lord, still cherished in their hearts aspirations after ambitious projects and worldly greatness. They fancied the kingdom of Jesus to be an earthly kingdom in which they would occupy high situations. This ambition is likely to astonish me, but let me examine myself as to whether my intentions are entirely pure. In following my vocation I might easily be led to seek worldly honour or wealth or power ; if then the aspirations of the sons of Zebedee strike me as unbecoming in followers of Jesus, let me beware of nursing a similar ambition in my heart.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord :—You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice I shall drink ? Our Lord might just as well have said : These worldly advantages are not the things for which I called you, but that, walking in my footsteps, sharing my poverty, my humiliations, my labours and sufferings, you may work with Me for the salvation of souls and thus obtain heaven. Let me apply all this to myself and answer humbly and generously with the sons of Zebedee : With the help of Thy grace, O Lord, I can and will.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus :—“ To sit on my right or left hand is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.” God has willed that each one shall receive glory in heaven in exact proportion to the amount of grace God has bestowed and the degree in which each has corresponded to it. If then I want a high place in heaven I must of necessity obtain God’s grace by fervent prayer and make diligent use of it. Mere wanting will not do—I must act. Let me remember this and begin at once.

CXCVI. THE TWO BLIND MEN AT JERICH0

And when they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold two blind men sitting by the wayside heard that Jesus passed by. And they cried out, saying : O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying : O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us. And Jesus stood and called them and said : What will ye that I

do to you ? They say to him : Lord that our eyes be opened. And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw and followed him (Matt. xv. 29-34).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him and to love Him better.

1ST POINT.—Consider in how many details of the spiritual life we resemble those two blind beggars. Like them we are blind : blind to our faults, our littleness ; blind to the greatness of God ; blind to the malice of sin and to the vanity of the things of this world ; blind to the danger of worldly attachments. Like those two blind men, we are sitting on the wayside ; that is, we are at a standstill, unable to go forward in the path of perfection. Like them, we are begging ; yes, seeking vain relief in the satisfaction of our senses, in the praise and esteem of men. Is not our blindness much worse than theirs ? How earnestly we should ask Jesus to cure us.

2ND POINT.—Consider how these men hearing that Jesus was passing by resolved not to miss so excellent an opportunity, and in a loud voice began to implore His mercy. Jesus comes so often to my heart ; how is it then, that I am not cured of my blindness ? Perhaps I lack the real desire to be cured, or fail in that confidence and perseverance which characterized the prayer of the blind men. If I followed their example Jesus would also have compassion on me, and help me to know Him and love Him and serve Him faithfully.

3RD POINT.—Consider how, when the multitude tried to make these two blind men hold their peace, they only cried out the more. In this they set us an excellent example. Whenever we attempt to approach God in prayer, and to implore His help in our needs, a multitude of frivolous pretexts at once suggest themselves to make us omit prayer altogether, or at least shorten it or hurry through it or say it without attention. But for ourselves, as for the two blind men, the necessity of prayer is so paramount that we should never neglect it, however plausible the reasons to do so may appear.

CXCVII. THE FAITH OF THE TWO BLIND MEN

The same narrative as in the previous meditation.

Ask Our Lord to teach you to look at all things in a spirit of faith that you may guide yourself by that spirit in all your actions.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this earnest persevering prayer moves the Heart of Jesus. Our prayer also would always do the same if it were like theirs ; if by our ardent desire to be heard we showed that we highly appreciate the gifts of God ; if by our perseverance we proved that we have full confidence in God's infinite power and goodness. Perhaps these two qualities are at times absent from our prayers and hence they become unworthy of being heard.

2ND POINT.—Consider what these men replied to Our Lord when He asked them :—" What will ye that I do to you ? They say : Lord, that our eyes be opened." If we realised the excellence of a living faith that would make us see all things in their true light, how fervently we would pray for it. With what ardour we too would say : Lord open our eyes, that we may know the vanity of the world and despise it ; that we may better understand God's infinite goodness and be drawn to imitate it ; that we may see our faults and correct them, drink in the beauty of virtue and strive to acquire it, perceive the dangers to which we are exposed and carefully avoid them.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus seeing the great faith of the two blind men made them whole. So would a living faith do for us. Were we to see sin with the eyes of a living faith we could not commit it ; were we to look upon Jesus in that same true light we could not help loving Him, obeying Him, and doing all in our power to please Him. What then would be the result if we were to see in this light of living faith, Jesus in our superiors, in our brethren, in the poor, the children, the sinner ? How powerful an incentive it would be for us to behave properly towards them. It was this faith that animated the saints. Let us prostrate before Jesus fervently say : Lord, open our eyes.

CXCVIII. ZACHEUS ARDENTLY WISHES TO SEE OUR LORD

And entering in, he walked through Jericho. And behold, there was a man named Zacheus, who was the chief of the publicans : and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was : and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And running before, he climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him : for he was to pass that way (Luke xiv. 1-4).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great desire to know Him better and better.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Zacheus, because of all he had heard from others about Jesus, was most anxious to see and to know Him. We too, through the testimony of the saints, have often heard how good Our Lord is, what a source of light and wisdom, of strength and consolation, of peace and happiness He is to those that know Him. Shall we not then, after the example of Zacheus, desire with all our heart to know these things from our own experience, and use with the utmost diligence the many means God has so mercifully put at our disposal to help us to acquire this intimate knowledge ? Shall we not also like Zacheus remove all the obstacles that have till now prevented us from coming to that knowledge ?

2ND POINT.—Two things prevented Zacheus from seeing Jesus. First, the crowd did not allow him to approach the Divine Master ; and secondly, his own small stature prevented his looking over the heads of the others. How many—and am I among them ?—are prevented from coming to a more intimate knowledge of Jesus by similar obstacles. There is first the crowd of their imperfections, inordinate affections, unsubdued passions, or perhaps, the crowd of temporal cares and occupations that keep them from approaching Our Lord. There is secondly the littleness of faith, of confidence, of generosity and courage that unfits them for surmounting the difficulties of the way. Let me examine myself carefully on this point, and resolve with God's help to banish those obstacles that prevent my obtaining so great a boon.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Zacheus overcame the difficulties. He got out of the crowd and ran ahead, and then climbed up into a tree from which he was able to look over the heads of

the others. This is exactly what I should do myself, if I really want to attain to the intimate knowledge of Jesus that has been the source of so many blessings to the saints. I must escape from the crowd and run ahead ; that is, I must shake off those inordinate attachments to the things of this world and regulate my occupations and cares so that they may be no obstacle to prayer. I too must climb a tree, that is, if I lack courage I must raise my heart up to God to obtain from Him more courage, more faith, more confidence, and then I too shall receive the same reward as Zacheus.

CXCIX. ZACHEUS RECEIVES JESUS

And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, he saw him and said to him : Zacheus, make haste and come down : for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down and received him with joy. And when all saw it, they murmured, saying, that he was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But Zacheus standing, said to the Lord : Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold. Jesus said to him : This day is salvation come to this house....For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke xix. 5-10).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a true desire to know Him more and more and to love Him better.

1st POINT.—Consider how Zacheus, being a publican, was looked upon by the Jews as a sinner. Sinner perhaps he was, yet Our Lord knew him to be repentant and ready to atone generously for the faults he had committed. Jesus also was pleased at this man's great desire to see Him and at the efforts he had made to do so, and so did the Divine Master not only grant him what he wished, but much more than he would have even dared to aspire to. In the same way Our Lord loves to reward those that sincerely wish to know Him and make generous efforts after that knowledge by their serious application to prayer. Even if they have sinned before, provided they be repentant and strive to repair their past offences, Jesus will, forgetting the past, lovingly come to help them. Surely this example of Zacheus must greatly encourage us.

2ND POINT.—Consider the great joy of Zacheus when he heard that the Lord was coming to his house. How glad he felt to have made those efforts to see Him. So it is for those who apply themselves earnestly to prayer. The beginnings may be somewhat hard ; generous and constant effort may be necessary ; but in the end, sweet beyond expectation is the reward when Our Lord reveals Himself to them. Call to mind the experiences of the saints and of so many pious souls, and by this remembrance excite in your heart with God's help a sincere determination to imitate their endeavours.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus to Zacheus :—This day is salvation come to this house. Happy those who by their fervour have drawn Jesus to abide in their hearts. For with Him comes all good : light and strength to advance in the path of perfection, consolation and peace midst the trials of life, protection against danger till they land safely on the shores of a happy eternity. Is such a reward not worth all the efforts, all the pains we may have to endure to secure it ?

CC. THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

And when they drew nigh to Jerusalem...Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them : Go ye into the village that is over against you : and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me...And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt and laid their garments upon them and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way : and others cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying : Hosanna to the son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest...And Jesus went into the temple of God...And there came to him the blind and the lame in the temple : and he healed them. And the chief priests and scribes, seeing the wonderful things that he did and the children crying in the temple and saying : Hosanna to the son of David, were moved with indignation, and said to him : Hearest thou what these say ? And Jesus said to them : Yea, have you never read : Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise ? (Matt. xxi. 1-16).

Humbly ask Our Lord that by this meditation He may increase your reverence and love towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the multitudes that met Our Lord and manifested their love and reverence towards Him. They had seen Him for nigh upon three years in their midst, so kind, so patient, so wise and holy. He had taught them so zealously the way to heaven. He had worked so many miracles for them, restoring sight to their blind, making their lame walk, raising their dead to life, commanding and driving out evil spirits. And the people saw in Him the promised Redeemer who would deliver them from their enemies. It seems but natural then that their hearts should be filled with gratitude and reverence towards Him. Let me reflect how all the same reasons, only better understood, exist for me. Who can estimate at their true value the gifts I have received from Jesus? How good and holy I know Him to be ! He has truly redeemed me from the worst of enemies. Should all this not fill my heart with admiration, respect, love and gratitude towards Him and urge me to love Him ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus takes a special pleasure in the praise given Him by little ones ; so much so that He wished it to be foretold in the Holy Scriptures. And then remember that still now it is the praise and love of those that are, like little children, simple and humble of heart, that He values most, and is most acceptable to Him. Let this consideration excite you to the practice of these virtues.

3RD POINT.—Think how a few days later these same multitudes were shouting before the house of Pilate:—Crucify Him ! Crucify Him ! Yet Jesus had not changed ; but they had allowed themselves to be perverted by their blind passions. How many have since been perverted in the same way, and how necessary it is to subdue our passions, lest we too one day turn against Him who never ceases to deserve all our love and gratitude.

CCI. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

A certain man had two sons ; and coming to the first, he said : Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. And he answering, said : I will not. But afterwards, being moved with repentance, he went. And coming to the other, he said in like manner. And he answering, said : I go, Sir. And he went not. Which of the two did

the father's will? They say to him: The first. Jesus saith to them: Amen I say to you that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you (Matt. xxi. 28-31).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your determination of openly professing His holy teaching by word and deed.

1ST POINT.—Consider the behaviour of the first of these two sons. He has every reason to obey his father: the order given him is a most reasonable one; by working in his father's vineyard whose heir he is, he works for his own advantage; by neglecting the work he acts against his own interests. Besides, the reverence he owes his father should be a sufficient motive to obey cheerfully; in answering as he does he shows himself an undutiful and ungrateful child. I may apply all this to myself whenever I transgress the commandments of God. These commandments are most reasonable; they are entirely for my own temporal and spiritual good, by observing them I further my own interest, by transgressing them I do harm to myself; and besides how ungrateful I am towards Him to whom I owe all that I have and all that I am. These thoughts brought to that undutiful son deep regrets for what he had done, and induced him to show his repentance not by words only but by deeds. May they also produce the same effect on me, and make me more fervent in God's service as a reparation for my past offences.

2ND POINT.—Consider the behaviour of the second son. When his father commands him, he says: I go. But he does not go. This is just the behaviour of those who profess to love God by their words, but who in their actions give proof of the contrary by offending Him. This son seeks to deceive his father, but only deceives himself. So do they whose service of God consists only in fine words, but who in reality serve Him very negligently, and do not hesitate to transgress His commandments.

3RD POINT.—This parable was spoken by Our Lord for the instruction of the Pharisees who, while making a great show of piety, were breaking God's Law and shutting their hearts to His word. Therefore Jesus gives them this terrible warning:—Amen, I say to you that the publicans and harlots shall enter into the Kingdom of God before you. As if He had said: Sin, even the greatest, if sincerely repented of will obtain God's

pardon, and the sinner will find favour with Him ; but different will it be with such as are insincere towards Him, and conceal their evil deeds under the cloak of piety. We have perhaps sinned in the past ; we have acted like this first son ; let us repent and do penance, and Our Lord's merciful Heart will be open to us. But let us beware of hypocrisy in our dealings with God whose all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses of our hearts.

CCII. THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

There was a man...who planted a vineyard and made a hedge round about it and dug in it a press and built a tower and let it out to husbandmen and went into a strange country. And when the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits thereof. And the husbandmen laying hands on his servants, beat one and killed another and stoned another. And he sent other servants, more than the former ; and they did to them in like manner. And last of all he sent to them his son, saying : They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen seeing the son, said among themselves : This is the heir : come, let us kill him, and we shall have his inheritance. And taking him, they cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen ? They say to him : He will bring those evil men to an evil end and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-41),

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to make good use of His graces and to increase in you the horror of sin.

1ST POINT.—The Jewish people had received innumerable benefits from God Who had taken care of them as of His own chosen nation. This is the meaning of the beginning of this parable, but I can equally apply it to my own soul. Have I not been chosen by God ? Has He not surrounded my soul with His loving protection, as with a wall, to keep it secure from the dangers of the world ? Has He not bestowed on it at great cost to Himself innumerable graces, and then committed it to my care that I might cultivate it and make it bring forth abundant fruits of holiness ? How thankful I ought to be for all this.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the lord of the vineyard sent his servants to collect the fruits that were due to him. Doubtless after all he had done for this vineyard and for those in charge of it, he had a right to expect that they should make some return. God also has done for you a thousand times more than He has done for others and He has every right to expect from you abundant fruits in return for all His care and His graces : fruits of piety, humility, purity, obedience, and of all the virtues that should adorn the heart of a priest. Try to satisfy these just expectations of Our Lord. Do not act like those husbandmen and refuse Our Lord His due.

3RD POINT.—The Jewish people showed themselves most ungrateful to God. They killed the prophets He sent them and crucified His very Son ; and thus drew down upon themselves the most terrible punishment. Thus do those act who, after having received so many graces from God, commit mortal sin and crucify again—as Holy Scripture has it—their Divine Lord in their hearts. How terrible shall be the justice of God when it comes down upon them. If we have ever committed mortal sin, let us thank God who has by the merits of His Son allowed us to repent and make reparation, and thus escape the punishment we so truly deserved. Let us ask God to imprint in our hearts a great horror of mortal sin, and a firm purpose to avoid all that may lead us to it.

CCIII. THE NECESSITY OF MORTIFICATION

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to me, let him follow me (John xii. 24-26).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand His words and to help you to put them in practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider these words : “ Unless the grain of wheat falling, into the ground die, itself remaineth alone.” They refer to Our Lord’s passion and death. According to the infinitely wise dispositions of Providence, it was only when Jesus, the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, overwhelmed

with humiliations, would have expired on the cross, that the fruits of the incarnation would spring up into an abundant harvest of souls. But these words are quite as true of His disciples. I may fitly apply them to myself. I too am the little grain that has to fall into the ground and die there before it produce fruit either in myself or in others. If up to now I am so poor in virtue, if my work produces so little, perhaps it is because I do not want to humble and to mortify myself. Recall the example of the saints ; remember how they have reduced this great lesson of the Divine Master to practice ; and resolve generously to do likewise.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.” This means that whosoever loves himself immoderately shall lose his soul, whilst he that is not only ready to abandon the things of this world but even to despise and sacrifice them for God’s sake, secures his salvation. If then I seek only my own satisfaction, if I do not check my disorderly affections, I shall be in great danger of eternal loss. But if on the contrary I mortify my passions and evil inclinations, I shall thereby safeguard my eternal happiness. How foolish it would be to neglect this important lesson given me by Him who is infinite Wisdom !

3RD POINT.—Consider the words : “ If any man minister to me, let him follow me.” In these words Our Lord points out that He wants this lesson to be put into practice more particularly by those who are His ministers and ambassadors to men on earth ; that is, by us, his priests, who are called to work for Him and with Him at saving souls. We then especially must make these examples of self-humiliation and self-denial which Jesus has set us, the pattern upon which we must train ourselves.

CCIV. THE WIDOW’S MITE

And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury. And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow : and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he saith to them : Amen, I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury.

For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living (Mark xii. 41-44).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your purpose of being generous in God's service.

1ST POINT.—Consider Jesus sitting near the treasury of the Temple and watching the people who come to offer their gifts. Thus also He continually watches each one of us to see what we are doing for Him. How lovingly He detects every little sacrifice we make for Him, every little victory we gain over ourselves for His sake, every cross we bear, every effort we make out of love for Him. If we serve men of the world, they take little or no notice of all we do for them; or if they do remark it, be sure all is soon forgotten. But Jesus notices everything, forgets nothing and will generously reward even the smallest gift we offer Him. And yet we are perhaps more anxious to please men than to please Him. How foolish is such behaviour.

2ND POINT.—Consider how very differently from men Jesus values the gifts dropped into the treasury of the Temple. Men look at the gift, Jesus at the generosity of the giver; and the two mites of the poor widow are more in His eyes than the large sums of the rich. Let us then beware of thinking ourselves better than others, or judging our actions to be of greater value than theirs. Doubtless our actions may appear of great value in the eyes of men, but the doings of others, which we think little of and perhaps ridicule, may be far better than ours in God's sight.

3RD POINT.—Consider why it was that Jesus esteemed the two mites of the poor widow more than the big sums thrown in by the rich. It was because she had given all she had, while the others had only given out of their abundance. What we give to God, after fully satisfying ourselves, will bring us little merit; but when forgetting ourselves and our temporal interests, we sacrifice comfort and pleasure for His glory, these sacrifices are very precious in His sight, because they are true proofs of our love for Him. If then we are incapable of works that appear great before men, let us rejoice that we have in our daily life very many occasions of making some little sacrifice, all the more precious that it is less noticeable. Let us eagerly take advantage of these occasions of giving Jesus proofs of our love and fidelity in His service.

CCV. THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish and five wise. But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made : Behold the bridegroom cometh. Go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise : Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying : Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy the bridegroom came : and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. And the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying : Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering, said : Amen, I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant that you may always keep yourself in readiness for His coming.

1ST POINT.—Consider those ten virgins who had been invited to the marriage-feast, and who all accepted the invitation. They are an image of those who invited by God to the glory and happiness of heaven have resolved to work out their salvation. But as amongst these virgins, some were wise and some foolish, and the foolish forgot to take oil with them ; so also amongst Christians some are found, who while preserving the faith neglect to foster divine charity in their hearts, and live in a state of mortal sin. Truly such may be called foolish, for knowingly exposing themselves to such terrible consequences.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the bridegroom after tarrying for some time, suddenly arrived when all were asleep. How frequently death comes in the same way ! When people do not think of it, they hear the summons of God. Happy then those that are ready ! What a sad state for a soul that is not ! Perhaps, through the mercy of God such a soul may be still given time to buy oil for the lamp, that is, to reconcile itself with God ; but how much cause there is in such a case for real anxiety ! Perhaps no time is allowed, and then the soul shall share the fate of the foolish virgins and shall be excluded forever from the heavenly banquet. Shall I expose myself to such a danger ?

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of the Lord to the foolish virgins :—I know you not. How terrible these words shall sound to the Christian who has been taken unprepared. In vain shall he plead that he was once God's child, that he has been so long in God's service, that he has even been God's priest, His ambassador to man, the guardian of the Holy Mysteries. Our Lord shall answer :—I know you not. All is forfeited and that forever. How bitter, how vain, shall then be the regrets of that soul ! Let us resolve to watch and pray that they never be ours.

CCVI. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS— THEIR DISTRIBUTION

A man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability : and immediately he took his journey. And he that had received the five talents went his way and traded with the same and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged into the earth and hid his lord's money (Matt. xxv. 14-19).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of making good use of His gifts.

1st POINT.—Consider the kindness of this rich man towards his servants. They were poor people and had no means of acquiring wealth. Their master anxious to help them puts his own goods at their disposal, so that while working for him they might have the opportunity of earning a great reward for themselves. This is what Our Lord has done for us but in a far more excellent manner. We were the slaves of the devil, and in our hands were no means of amassing wealth for heaven. Then Jesus put at our disposal the immense treasures of grace, bought at the price of His most precious Blood, so that by employing them we may enrich our souls and become saints. How thankful we ought to be and how careful to profit by His goodness.

2ND POINT.—Consider how although the rich man does not divide his goods equally among his servants, yet he gives a large

sum to each of them. In the same way although we have not all received an equal share of graces from Our Lord, yet we have all received more than enough to work out our salvation. Hence those who have received less should not envy those who have received more, but rather rejoice in the gifts of others ; and on the other hand, those who have received more, should not despise those who have less, but all should diligently apply themselves to making the gifts of their Divine Master bear fruit for His glory. For remember it is not he who has received most who shall receive the greatest reward but he who has made the best use of his talents. And much shall be demanded of those who have received much.

3RD POINT.—Consider how each servant was entrusted with his master's goods according to his capacity. Although God can grant His graces to whom He likes and as He likes, yet according to the usual dispensation of His Providence, He grants to each one according to the disposition of his heart. The more humble I am, the more diligent and generous in making good use of the means at my disposal, the more I esteem and am grateful for His gifts, the more generous will He be towards me. Resolve then to acquire these necessary dispositions.

CCVII. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS— THE ACCOUNT

But after a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming brought other five talents, saying : Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents. Behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him : Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came and said : Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me. Behold I have gained other two. His lord said to him : Well done, good and faithful servant : because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matt. xxv. 19-23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your determination of making better use of His gifts.

1ST POINT.—Consider how good a use the two faithful servants made of the goods their master had entrusted to them. They knew that these riches were not theirs, but his, and as they loved him sincerely, they made his interests their own and worked diligently for him. Moreover they were well aware that he would reward them handsomely for whatever they did for him. And so, as soon as their master was gone, they set themselves to work, without delay, with no loss of time, and with constant care, till they had doubled the sum he had left with them. How do I behave in regard to God's gifts? They are not mine; do I use them for His greater glory? Do I use them diligently and with constant care, so as to make them bear abundant fruit? Do I now and then think of His love and the great reward He has promised?

2ND POINT.—Consider how happy those faithful servants were on their master's return. They had long looked out for the day when they would hand in their accounts, because they knew that it would be for them a day of reward as well. So shall it be for me, if during the time God grants me I work diligently to secure not my own glory and satisfaction but His greater glory. How joyfully I shall then meet Him to offer Him the fruits of my labour.

3RD POINT.—Consider how lovingly this lord receives his faithful servants; how liberally he rewards them; how abundantly he compensates them for their labours. So shall it be with me one day, if I throw myself heart and soul into the work assigned me in the service of my Divine Master.

CCVIII. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS— THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

But he that had received the one talent came and said : Lord, I know that thou art a hard man ; thou reapest where thou hast not sown and gatherest where thou hast not strewed. And being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth. Behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him : Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not and gather where I have not strewed. Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers : and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore

the talent from him... And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. xxv. 24-30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your resolve of never becoming negligent and slothful in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great damage and injustice done to his master by that careless servant. A big sum of money had been entrusted to him ; if properly managed it should have produced considerable profit, but by his negligence, the servant had gathered in nothing. This is an image of the injustice the slothful are guilty of towards God when they fail to profit by the graces He gives them. Let me reflect seriously on my own behaviour. Innumerable and precious are the graces I have received : instructions, the Sacraments, Holy Mass, meditation, the canonical Office and others. These certainly have been abundantly sufficient to make me a saint. Have I employed them for my sanctification, or have they remained fruitless through my negligence ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the pretexts by which the unfaithful servant tries to excuse himself and to throw the blame on his generous master, are turned against himself. Am I not deceiving myself with similar excuses ? Perhaps to-day I am inclined to say and to believe, I cannot be holy. And one day God will show me so many thousands who under the same circumstances have sanctified themselves, and He will say to me, Could you not, with the help of my grace, do what these have done ? Perhaps to-day I say, I cannot overcome my evil inclinations. And one day God will ask, What efforts did you make to conquer them ? Did you, in your weakness, appeal to me for strength and assistance ? Perhaps to-day I say, The world and the creatures around me entice me away from God. But God will enquire, Why did you not avoid them as I warned you ? If, till now, I have blinded myself with such or similar pretexts let me lay them bravely aside at once, and behave more fairly with Our Lord.

3RD POINT.—Consider the punishment meted out to the unfaithful servant, and that not because he misused, but only because he failed to use the means his lord had put at his disposal. Let this be a warning for you, to make every effort to shake off all negligence or carelessness in God's service.

CCIX. WE MUST ALWAYS BE READY

Be you then also ready : for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come (Luke xii. 40).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to do now what you shall one day wish to have done.

1ST POINT.—At present, time is given you to settle the debts you have contracted with God by former sins, and to enable you to gather riches for heaven by the practice of virtue. Hence, take care that when death comes, it finds you not only in the state of grace, but also with many of your debts already cancelled. Besides, it is of first importance that you acquire, while you can, many merits for heaven ; for once death comes, the time of meriting is over and you shall obtain in heaven the degree of glory and happiness you have prepared for yourself by the use you have made of God's graces here on earth.

2ND POINT.—Consider that the only way to have your sins blotted out, and to be rich in merits at the hour of your death, is to begin at once to take advantage of all the means of salvation God so kindly places at your disposal. If you fail to do so, you shall not only find yourself unprepared but shall have cause for bitter regrets when too late.

3RD POINT.—Reflect upon the uncertainty of the hour. We do not know whether much or little time is left us. All we know is that we have to be ready. How foolish then to count on the future to prepare ourselves, and in the meantime to neglect the present occasion !

PART III

THE SACRED PASSION

CCX. JESUS EATS THE PASCHAL FEAST

Before the festival day of the Pasch, Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father : having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end (John xiii. 1). And when the hour was come, he sat down : and the twelve apostles with him. And he said to them : With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer (Luke xxii. 14-15). And whilst they were eating, he said : Amen I say to you that one of you is about to betray me (Matt. xxvi. 21).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand better His great love for you, and to excite in your heart a firm determination to love Him in return.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord, instead of shrinking from the terrible sufferings and humiliations that awaited him, actually desired them, that so we might be delivered from sin and hell, become God's children and be made worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven. How great is His love for us poor and miserable creatures ; and how strangely it contrasts with our want of generosity, which causes us to shrink from the little sacrifices which the fulfilment of our duty demands of us. Humble yourself before your loving Saviour, beg pardon for your past ingratitude, and promise to love Him more generously in future.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord's heart was filled with anguish at the thought that His own Apostles, whom He had loved with a special love, and whom He had taken so much trouble to instruct, would abandon and be ashamed of Him. Nay more, that one of them would deny Him, and another, worst of all, would betray Him and deliver Him into the hands of His enemies. Let me reflect what Jesus must have thought of me at that sad moment. I too have been the object of His special care, and still how often perhaps by my sins, my lack of generosity, my negligence, my indifference towards Him, have I not made a poor return for all He has done for me.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words : “ He loved them unto the end.” They apply to me also and have been verified in me. How true it is that in spite of my unworthiness, Jesus has never ceased to love me, and is never tired of loading me with new favours ! Shall I still refuse to be conquered ? Or shall I, on the contrary, do all I can to prove my gratitude for the generous love He has exhibited towards one so unworthy of His affection ? Reflect and take firm resolutions.

CCXI. JESUS WASHES HIS APOSTLES’ FEET

Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth to God, he riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments and, having taken a towel, girded himself...and began to wash the feet of his disciples...Then after he had washed their feet and taken his garments, being set down again, he said to them : Know you what I have done to you ? You call me Master and Lord. And you say well : for so I am. If then I being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. Amen, amen, I say to you : The servant is not greater than his lord : neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them (John xiii. 3-5. 12-17).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to apply yourself generously to the practice of humility.

1ST POINT.—Consider how ardently Our Lord desires that humility be practised by those that belong to Him. He therefore sets His Apostles a striking example of it just before entering upon His passion, that they may never forget the lesson. You too have been chosen by Jesus to be His apostle and hence He desires to find this virtue in your heart. He desires it, because He loves you and knows the great dangers of pride as well as the necessity and wonderful advantages of humility. Ask Our Lord to help you to understand better and better this holy lesson, and make earnest endeavours to acquire this beautiful virtue.

2ND POINT.—Consider Jesus washing His Apostles’ feet. He is infinite in Majesty, the Son of God. Look at what He

is doing : a work reserved to menials and slaves. And for whom ? For poor men, infinitely below Him in everything. What a shame for us to put ourselves above anyone, or to think it beneath our dignity to render some humble service to others. Let us resolve firmly to imitate our Divine Master more closely ; for as Our Lord says, the apostle is not greater than He who sent him.

3RD POINT.—Consider Our Lord at the feet of Judas. Jesus had already clearly warned this unhappy Apostle : He now throws Himself at his feet, washes and wipes them. But even such loving condescension does not touch the heart of Judas ; he remains hardened and unmoved. A frightful example of how those who have received great graces from God and who misuse them fall low and are hard to convert. May this be a warning to me, may it lead me to subdue vigorously my evil inclinations and to make good use of God's abundant graces.

CCXII. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCCHARIST

And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples and said : Take ye and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks and gave to them, saying : Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 26-28).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with great reverence and love towards the Blessed Sacrament.

1ST POINT.—Consider yourself as present at that Last Supper, and represent to yourself the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord knew what he had to expect from men. He foresaw how in this Sacrament He would only meet with unbelief from many, and with coldness, ingratitude and sacrilege from others. And still, to remain with man, to be an inexhaustible source of blessings for those who come to Him with love and confidence, to become the daily food of their souls, He performs and perpetuates the greatest of all miracles. Reflect what return you have made Jesus up till now for all the love He has shown you in this Sacrament of love. Repent if you have been ungrateful. Offer to Him your thanks, express

your love and the desire you have to see Him loved and honoured by all. Then, firmly resolve to make up, as much as you can, not only for your own, but also for the coldness and ingratitude of others towards Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider how none but infinite wisdom and love could have planned such a marvel, and none but infinite power could have executed it. Adore with humble faith ; admire with loving astonishment all the miracles our merciful God has performed to give Himself to you. Resolve once more to give yourself entirely to Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider the intentions of Our Lord in instituting the Blessed Eucharist. He wished to remain with us, as a loving Father with his children. He wanted to be always at our disposal, to help us in our difficulties, to console us in our sorrows, to advise us in our doubts, to strengthen us against temptation, and to bless our work. What a happiness for us to have such a friend, so good, so loving, and at the same time, so wise and powerful ! What a treasure it is for a priest who is so very much in need of such assistance ! How foolish he would be to neglect it ! Our Lord wished besides to become the food of our souls, and to make our hearts His dwelling place, in order that He might sanctify us, unite us to Himself, and make us more and more ready for heaven. Should we not do everything in our power to give such a guest a worthy reception ? Is it not a duty of gratitude to make our heart as fit a dwelling as possible for Him who is infinite holiness and infinite majesty ? Let me for the future cultivate great purity and strive to adorn my heart with all the priestly virtues.

CCXIII. THE COMMANDMENT OF JESUS : LOVE ONE ANOTHER

After the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus asserting once more His divinity and bidding farewell to His Apostles, says :—*A new commandment I give unto you : That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another (John, xiii 34-35).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a firm determination of putting His words into practice.

1ST POINT.—Consider how earnestly Our Lord desires charity to reign in the hearts of all His disciples and particularly in those of His Apostles. His words express no mere wish, but a strict command, and this is the last recommendation of His mortal life. He prays fervently and repeatedly that His Apostles and all those who believe in Him may be closely united in the bonds of charity. He insists on this mutual love and declares it to be the sign by which the world shall recognise His true disciples. Will not all this convince me of the necessity of applying myself to the acquirement of that charity so dear to the Heart of Jesus? Shall I not try to practise it in all its perfection, in my thoughts and judgments, my words and actions? Does Jesus recognise in me His true disciple?

2ND POINT.—Consider what an exalted model Our Lord proposes to us for the practice of charity. The old commandment was to love our neighbour as ourselves; Jesus gives us a much more perfect one: to love one another as He has loved us. And, how has Jesus loved men? He has loved them with a supernatural love: He has loved in them the image of His Heavenly Father. He has loved them with a universal love, including in it His bitterest enemies. He has loved them with a patient and compassionate love: their ignorance, their rudeness, their defects, and even their sins are the object of His inexhaustible mercy. He has loved them with a most disinterested and self-sacrificing love: He devoted Himself to their instruction, for their sake He renounced all the goods of this world, and embraced a life of poverty, obedience and mortification; for their sake He shrank from no suffering, no humiliation however great; and in fine, for their sake He shed His blood even to the last drop and died on the cross. How unworthy should I be to call myself His disciple, if I were to seek only myself, and if I could not sacrifice my comforts and pleasures, when required, to do good to others. Let me examine myself in the light of my divine Model, and with the help of God's grace firmly resolve to walk generously in His footsteps.

CCXIV. JESUS GOES TO GETHSEMANI

Then Jesus came with them (the Apostles) into a country place which is called Gethsemani. And he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. And taking with him.

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he saith to them : My soul is sorrowful even unto death (Matt. xvi. 36-38).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a deep sorrow for your sins and a sincere desire of making reparation for them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great love of Our Lord for you. He knows all that awaits Him in the garden of Olives. His cruel passion with all its torments and humiliations is to begin there, and Our Lord allows the natural fear of these dreadful sufferings to take hold of him. Still, nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing the great work of Redemption for which He came on earth. His love is greater than any fear. What an example for me. How ashamed I should be of the littleness of my love towards Jesus, when I see that any little trouble or difficulty is enough to make me fail in my good resolutions and perhaps even fall into sin. Humble yourself for being so wanting in generosity, and ask to be more generous and brave for the future.

2ND POINT.—Consider the causes that made the Heart of Jesus sorrowful unto death. A first cause was that He had before His mind both His own terrible passion and the cruel sufferings of His most holy Mother. A second cause was the sight of all the sins of men. He loved His Heavenly Father with a love we cannot fathom nor understand ; and hence how painful it must have been to Him to see His Father's infinite majesty and goodness so basely outraged by the millions of sins continually committed by His very creatures. Think of the share you had in inflicting this bitter sorrow on your Saviour ; repent, ask pardon, and renew in your heart the detestation of sin. A third cause of sorrow for Our Lord was the irreparable loss of so many souls that He loved so ardently as to die for them on a cross, and who in spite of this would wilfully go to eternal perdition. Beg Jesus fervently that His passion and death may not have been endured in vain in your own case.

CCXV. THE AGONY OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying and saying : My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.— And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground (Matt. xxvi. 39. Luke xxi. 43-44).

Humbly ask for the grace to know Our Lord better and to love and imitate Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus in sight of the unspeakable sufferings that await Him, prays with perfect resignation to the will of His Heavenly Father. Cost what it may Jesus is determined to fulfil His Father's will. Ask Him to grant you also the grace of realising the greatness, the goodness, the infinite wisdom of God's holy providence so that you may embrace with entire resignation, humble submission, and love, whatever cross it may please God to send you.

2ND POINT.—Consider how cruel must have been that anguish of the Sacred Heart which could cause a bloody sweat to issue from His members and trickle to the ground. Remember that it is for you He suffers, compassionate Him and thank Him. Reflect on the share you had in pouring that anguish into the Heart of your Saviour ; repent sincerely and renew in yourself a great horror for sin. Then draw profit from the great example that Our Lord sets you. The most intense sufferings cannot make Him abandon prayer ; they only cause Him to pray the more. How often perhaps has the first effect of suffering been for you a reason to slacken in your fervour and to abandon what should have been a source of strength and consolation.

3RD POINT.—Consider the Angel who comes to console Our Lord. What a beautiful mission his was. Can I imagine that Angel fulfilling his mission in a slothful and negligent manner ? Evidently, he must have done all he could to prove himself worthy of it. Thus also Jesus expects consolation from those He has chosen in a special manner to be His own. He expects that by your fervour, your love, the practice of

virtue, you will console Him for the wickedness and ingratitude of so many who offend Him. What a noble mission this is, and with what ardent sentiments of zeal and gratitude you should determine to fulfil it. Take resolutions.

CCXVI. THE WARNING OF JESUS— WATCH AND PRAY

And when he rose up from prayer and was come to the disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.—And he said to Peter : What? Could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye : and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak (Luke xxii. 45. Matt xxvi. 40-41).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a firm resolve of never being negligent at your spiritual exercises.

1ST POINT.—Consider how pained Our Lord felt at finding that, while His enemies were actively plotting against Him, His dearest friends had not love enough to watch one hour with Him. Perhaps at that moment He thought of me also, of my coldness, my negligence at prayer and in my spiritual exercises ; and now could He not say to me, “I have loved you so much and done so much for you ; I have placed you among My dearest friends, and even made you My apostle ; and do you love Me so little, that while my enemies are so eager to outrage me, you cannot spend a short time in fervent prayer to console me ? What will I answer Him ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ Watch ye : and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.” Recall what happened to St. Peter and the Apostles for not having minded this warning. They truly loved their Divine Master. A short while before they had protested that they were ready to suffer anything rather than abandon Him. But relying on their own strength they did not watch and pray, with the result that at the first difficulty they all fell away. Then remember how weak you are, and how crafty and violent is the enemy of your soul. You are not stronger than the Apostles, nor is your love greater than theirs. How often you have already experienced your utter weakness ! Is it not still more important

for you to watch continually over your eyes, your tongue, your thoughts, your affections and to seek in prayer strength to overcome temptation? Ask God to help you to do so, and turn with humble confidence to Him who is the strength of the weak. Renew at the same time your determination to be watchful, and to apply yourself diligently and fervently to your spiritual exercises.

CCXVII. JESUS IS APPREHENDED

Judas therefore having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon therefore as He had said to them: I am he; they went backward and fell to the ground. Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound him.—Then the disciples, all leaving him, fled (John xviii. 3-6, 12. Matt. xxvi. 56).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to conceive a lively sorrow for your sins.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus before allowing Himself to be captured gives His enemies a striking proof of His power. He does so for two reasons; first as a warning against the evil deed they are about to commit, and secondly to make it clearly understood that He accepts of His own free will all the sufferings of His passion. Judas fell to the ground with the rest, but having remained deaf to the kind warnings of his Divine Master and insensible to His many proofs of love, he now remains equally insensible to this manifestation of Our Lord's terrible power. Reflect how hardened a sinner can become who has misused God's special graces: neither the love of God nor the dread of punishment makes any impression upon him. Is this story of Judas not verified in every priest who turns away from God to indulge his passions? The unhappy man knows well the great love of God and the terrible punishments of the sinner, nay, he has preached of these many

times to others ; but those truths so apt to convert the worldling fail to produce any effect upon him. O God of mercy save me from all that might lead to such a fate !

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus allows Himself to be bound as a malefactor, to be insulted and ill-treated by this vile rabble. No word of anger escapes Him. He could punish them, He could make them all fall trembling at His feet, but, instead, He only warns them and prays for them. What an example for me. Jesus is infinite in majesty, worthy of all honour, and He suffers all these outrages patiently and lovingly for my sake. I am only a poor sinner, deserving to be despised by all, and still I am perhaps unwilling, even for the sake of Our Lord, to suffer the slightest offence. Let me firmly resolve to be more generous in future, and to strive to imitate my Divine Master more closely in the practice of humility, meekness and patience.

CCXVIII. JUDAS BETRAYS OUR LORD

Judas, one of the twelve Our Lord had chosen, through love of money, sold his Divine Master to the chiefs of the Jews ; and having obtained from them a band of armed soldiers, delivered Jesus into their hands. But when the deed was done, and he had received the coveted price of his treason, he began to realise the horror of his crime, and sought to give back the money to those from whom he had it, saying :—*I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said : What is that to us ? Look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed and went and hanged himself with an halter (Matt. xxvii. 4-5).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand the necessity of mortifying your inclinations.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Judas, an Apostle, living on intimate terms with Jesus, daily hearing His holy lessons, and with His example continually before him, came little by little to such a fearful crime. He allowed the longing for riches, the greed for money to enter his heart, and it made a thief of him, it obscured his conscience, and it increased in intensity, till finally it made him betray his good Master into the hands of the enemy. Remember that any evil inclination, if not

subdued, may produce the same evil effects in ourselves, and lead us to utter spiritual ruin, notwithstanding the holiness of our vocation, and the special graces we have received from God. Examine and see if there is no such inclination lurking in your heart, and inclination to pride, to anger and resentment, to sensuality, and if there be any, resolve firmly with God's grace, not to rest until you have conquered it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how, when Judas had obtained by his crime the money he so eagerly coveted, it brought him no happiness, nay, it even became loathsome to him, and a source of utter misery. How much the same it is with those who satisfy their evil inclinations : scarcely have they obtained what they wanted when they begin to feel unhappy and miserable about it ; nothing remains but remorse, a feeling of self-degradation, and the fear of God's punishments. How far better then it is to mortify our passions. It is only by doing so that we shall enjoy secure peace and true happiness. Take appropriate resolutions.

3RD POINT.—Think of the horrible state of despair into which Judas fell. If he had, instead, sincerely repented and thrown himself at the feet of Jesus, doubtless the merciful Heart of our Saviour would have opened to him and fully pardoned him. Remember how often you yourself have found mercy with your Saviour. Thank Him for it now with your whole heart, and resolve over again to live faithful to him.

CCXIX. JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST

And they led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year... The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him : I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort : and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me ? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them. Behold they know what things I have said. And when he had said these things, one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying : Answerest thou the high priest so ? Jesus answered him : If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil ; but if well, why striketh thou me ?—But they holding Jesus led him to Caiphas the high priest, where the scribes and the ancients were

assembled... And the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death. And they found not.... And the high priest rising up, said to him: Answerest thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed. What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death (John xviii. 13, 19-23. Matt xxvi. 57-66).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know, love and imitate Him better.

1ST POINT.—Consider all the outrages to which Jesus is submitted before Annas and Caiaphas: His enemies gloat over His humiliations; He is falsely accused and struck in the face. Remember that He is the God of infinite majesty and holiness, the almighty Creator of these very men who are insulting Him, men full of wickedness and hypocrisy. Still, He suffers in silence, or when it is necessary to answer, He does so meekly and humbly. How do you imitate this example in time of humiliation or contradiction, or when reproached with some fault?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the priests of the Jews are blinded by their pride. The Saviour whom God had promised their forefathers, the Desired of nations, in whom all the prophecies are fulfilled, stands before them. But instead of examining His claims, they have condemned Him beforehand, and try to find some excuse by which to justify themselves before the nation. The solemn warning of Jesus goes unheeded, and they condemn to death the Son of God. Reflect how passion, if not subdued, can blind men and bring them to the greatest of crimes. How watchful then we should be over ourselves, and how convinced of the necessity of continually and generously mortifying our passions and regulating our inclinations.

3RD POINT.—Consider how plainly and courageously Jesus answers the question put by the high priest in the name of God, although He knows all the consequences of His answer.

Learn from this to do your duty at any cost, whenever the truth and God's glory demand it. What a shame it would be for a disciple of such a Master to be a slave to human respect, and to fail out of cowardice to do his duty in word or action !

CCXX. THE TRIPLE DENIAL OF ST. PETER

And Peter followed him afar off, even to the court of the high priest. And going in, he sat with the servants, that he might see the end...And there came to him a servant maid, saying : Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying : I know not what thou sayest. And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him ; and she saith to them that were there : This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath : I know not the man. And after a little while, they came that stood by and said to Peter : Surely thou also art one of them. For even thy speech doth discover thee. Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. And immediately the cock crew.—And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as He had said : Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter going out, wept bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 58, 69-75. Luke xxii. 61-62).

Humbly ask Our Lord to impress on you the necessity of watchfulness and prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider how low St. Peter falls, and that on the very day of his first communion, on the very day he had been ordained a priest and made a bishop. He had protested that he was ready to suffer anything, nay, even to die for His Master ; and he really meant it. But he had trusted in his own strength and had neglected the warning of Jesus to watch and pray, and this was the reason of his fall. He had already lost his first fervour when he followed Jesus afar off ; and still he exposes himself to greater risk by sitting amongst the enemies of Our Lord. Is it a wonder then that he falls miserably at the voice of a woman ? Reflect how dangerous it is to slacken in fervour, to be careless in avoiding occasions, or to expose yourself to temptation by becoming negligent at prayer. You are not stronger than St. Peter, nor do you love Our Lord more than he. If then he could fall so grievously, how much more

easily might you fall. Resolve never to cease watching over your heart and your senses, and never to become slothful in your spiritual exercises.

2ND POINT.—Consider how painful this denial of St. Peter must have been to the loving Heart of Jesus; the more so as Peter was so dear to Him and had been entrusted with such a high dignity. Let us remember that we priests have also been the special objects of the love and confidence of our Divine Master; and that, in consequence, our sins imply a special ingratitude towards Him and offend Him more grievously than the sins of those less favoured than ourselves.

3RD POINT.—Consider how merciful Jesus is to St. Peter. He turns round and looks at him, with a look so full of sorrow and tender reproach, that it penetrated the heart of the unfaithful Apostle with a most sincere repentance. Remember what mercy Our Lord has shown you. When you sinned He could in all justice have punished you severely, but instead how merciful has He been. Let His look then penetrate your heart; sincerely repent of having offended so good a Master; thank Him with all your heart for His infinite mercy; and resolve firmly with the help of His grace never to offend Him again.

CCXXI. THE REPENTANCE OF ST. PETER

And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter going out wept bitterly (Luke xvii. 61-62).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a great desire of making reparation for past sins.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the look of Jesus reminded St. Peter of His Divine Master's warning, and at the same time called back to mind all the love Our Lord had borne him, all the favours He had bestowed upon him, all the holy lessons and example He had given him. This remembrance made the Apostle fathom the depth of his ingratitude and filled his heart with keen sorrow. Do these thoughts excite the same feelings in your heart, or does the look of Jesus go unnoticed?

2ND POINT.—Consider how different the repentance of St. Peter is from that of Judas. Judas gave way to despair. St. Peter recognising his own ingratitude, remembered at the same time the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus of which he had seen so many beautiful examples, and put his entire trust in the goodness of his Divine Master. Nor was he deceived. Not only did Jesus forgive him, but He never reproached him for his faithlessness; He admitted him again to His special friendship and loaded him with more favours than ever. May these considerations excite confidence in our hearts; our past sins must not discourage us, however grievous or numerous they are; if we are sincerely repentant, Jesus will never reject us.

3RD POINT.—St. Peter's repentance was a sincere one. His was certainly not the repentance of a day or two; and although Jesus showed him in every manner that He had fully forgiven him, Peter never ceased to weep over the sorrow he had caused his Divine Master; the more favours Peter now received from Jesus, the more vividly he remembered his base ingratitude. Besides St. Peter's repentance was not an empty sorrow; it was for him a continual incentive to atone for his fault. It made him thoroughly humble and full of mercy towards others in their sins and failings; it prompted him to seize every occasion of showing Our Lord how sincerely he loved Him. Henceforth his life was spent in labouring for the glory of his Divine Master, in willingly embracing all hardships and sufferings for His sake, and in gladly laying down his life for Him. Behold a model of repentance. Resolve to follow St. Peter's example generously.

CCXXII. JESUS IN THE HOUSE OF THE HIGH PRIEST

And the men that held him mocked him and struck him. And they blindfolded him and smote his face. And they asked him, saying: Prophecy: Who is it that struck thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against him. (Luke xxii. 63-65).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand how much He has loved you, and to help you to love Him in return.

1ST POINT.—Put before your eyes the horrible scene of those vile servants and soldiers ill-treating and outraging your Saviour. Listen to their blasphemies, their insults. Look how they slap Him, buffet Him, spit in His sacred face. Jesus, the God of infinite majesty, suffers all this to atone for the sins of pride and sensuality of men. Had you not your own share in inflicting those outrages and sufferings upon Him? Excite in your heart feelings of compassion, of sorrow for your sins, of tender love and gratitude towards our dear Lord.

2ND POINT.—Consider how all those insults, all that ill-treatment, are only an image of the outrages and sacrileges which Jesus actually endures from unbelievers and bad Christians. Let this thought enkindle in your heart an ardent desire of making reparation to Him by your own devotedness and love for all He suffers.

3RD POINT.—Consider the admirable example of humility, patience and meekness which Jesus sets us. He is infinite in majesty and yet allows Himself to be thus treated by the vilest of men, and we who are only poor sinful creatures wish to be honoured, respected and praised, and are dissatisfied if we are not. He is infinite in holiness and undergoes all these torments for our sins; and we are perhaps unwilling to bear the slightest inconvenience or humiliation, or break forth in angry complaints and harsh words when we have anything to suffer. Jesus is almighty and could justly punish those wretches who treated Him so cruelly without reason, yet He puts up with all in meekness and silence, and only prays for His tormentors; whilst if anything is done or said that hurts us, we are inclined to give way to feelings of anger and revenge. How much reason we have to humble ourselves before our Divine Master. How much we have still to learn before we become His true disciples. Take generous resolutions to correct what is faulty in your conduct, for the love of Jesus.

CCXXIII. JESUS FALSELY ACCUSED BEFORE PILATE

And straightway in the morning, the chief priests holding a consultation with the ancients and scribes and the whole council, binding Jesus, led him away and delivered him to Pilate.—And

they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said : What accusation bring you against this man ? They answered and said to him : If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.—We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar and saying that he is Christ the king.—Then Pilate saith to him : Dost thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against thee ? And he answered him to never a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly (Mark xv. 1. John xviii. 28-30. Luke xviii. 2. Matt xxvii. 13-14).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a firm determination of serving Him sincerely and generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider how active the enemies of Jesus are in bringing about His condemnation. They had been busy till late at night ; and again they are up as soon as it is day to sit in council against Him. Their hatred stifles their aversion for Pilate, and they themselves bring Jesus to him. Think how still now-a-days His enemies pursue Jesus with the same relentless activity : to destroy His Church, to pervert His children, to ruin the souls so dear to Him, they leave no stone unturned. Nothing is too mean or too difficult for them when there is question of satisfying their hatred. Would it not then be shameful, if we, Our Lord's privileged ones, were less active in defending Him and working for Him, than His enemies are in attacking Him and destroying souls ? Are we not in honour bound, out of mere gratitude, to do all we can to attain to own our perfection and to save the souls of others ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the behaviour of the Jews. They are extremely particular about entering the house of a pagan for fear of being legally defiled, and at the same time do not shrink from hatred, false accusations, and even the murder of One they know to be innocent. They put on an outward show of justice and care nothing for the most grievous offence against God. While detesting their hypocrisy, strengthen your purpose never to imitate it even in small things, by, for instance, doing your duty only in order not to displease your superiors and forgetting that you are always in God's sight.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Jews finding no cause for condemnation, have recourse to false accusations, and try to frighten Pilate into submission by provoking a tumult. The

devil acts in exactly the same way with us when he wants to make us crucify Our Lord in our hearts by sin. Of course he cannot bring forward any good reason for us to commit such wickedness, so he too uses deceit and false pretexes, and excites our passions, our pride and our sensuality. Resolve firmly not to allow yourself to be influenced as Pilate was, but resist bravely and subdue your unruly passions.

CCXXIV. PILATE QUESTIONS JESUS

Pilate therefore went into the hall again and called Jesus and said to him : Art thou the king of the Jews ?...Jesus answered : My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him : Art thou a king then ? Jesus answered : Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world ; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him : What is truth ? And when he said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them : I find no cause in him (John xviii. 33. 36-38).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your love and reverence towards Him, and to help you to serve Him generously.

1ST POINT.—Consider yourself listening to Jesus while He affirms His Kingship, and reflect how truly He has every right to reign supreme in your heart. He is by right your King since He has created you and since you depend upon Him for all that you have and all that you are. He is by right your King because when you were irremediably lost He redeemed you at the price of His blood. He is by right your King since you are consecrated to Him. Moreover how very worthy He is to reign over you. Who can be compared to Him for wisdom, power, majesty, goodness and holiness ? It must then be most advantageous and desirable to be subject to Him in all things. He will defend you against your most powerful and crafty enemies ; He will enrich you with His heavenly treasures ; He will procure for you that peace of God's children which surpasses all understanding. Examine yourself as to whether Our Lord reigns in your heart entirely and perfectly ; that is, see if all

your thoughts, desires, words and actions are in conformity with His holy will. If so, thank Him, and promise to strive to remain in His grace ; if not, take a firm resolution to do away bravely and from this moment with anything that might displease Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Pilate conducts himself. He puts Our Lord a most important question, but goes away without waiting for an answer. He is the type of those who shut their eyes to the consideration of their duties for fear of having to change their ways. How unreasonable. I know Our Lord is the Truth, the Way and the Life ; if to His teaching on the necessity of humility, mortification, detachment from self and things of the world, I turn a deaf ear, in order to follow my own inclinations more freely, how I deceive and harm myself. How different it would have been had Pilate listened to and followed the truth.

CCXXV. PILATE SENDS JESUS TO HEROD

But they (the chief priests) were more earnest, saying : He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the man were of Galilee ? And when he understood that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days. And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad : for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him ; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by him. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing.....And Herod with his army set him at nought and mocked him, putting on him a white garment : and sent him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 5-9, 11).

Humbly ask Our Lord in this meditation to know Him and love Him better and better.

1ST POINT.—Consider the admirable silence of Our Lord in spite of all the false accusations of His enemies. Pilate himself knowing His innocence could not help wondering at it. Think what a beautiful example Jesus sets us of how to accept humiliations. When some one has said something that is hurtful, when you are reprimanded, do you imitate the humility and the silence of Jesus ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord answers not one word to the eager inquiries of Herod. Herod was a proud man, leading an impure life, seeking only to satisfy his curiosity without any desire to amend his evil ways. Consider what an immense favour it is that Jesus so great, so wise, so holy, should deign to speak to his poor and little sinners. However, He wishes to do so, and will surely make Himself more and more known to us, if we do our best to make ourselves worthy. But Jesus does not manifest Himself to the proud, nor to those whose hearts are attached to sin, nor to such as have no desire to profit by His graces. The more pure and humble of heart we are, the more ready to put in practice His holy lessons, the more abundant shall be the light He will grant us. See what obstacles you put to His favours and resolve to banish them.

3RD POINT.—Consider the deep humiliation Jesus takes upon Himself for your sake, when He allows Himself to be derided and dressed as a fool, and thus led, in broad daylight, through the streets of Jerusalem. What unworthy disciples are we, if we like to be thought wise and learned; or if we resent our opinions being made little of, the advice of others being preferred to ours, or even our falling into some mistake. Perhaps even we get angry and discouraged at such times. Pray fervently to Our Lord that He may give you the grace to imitate Him by bearing such humiliations at least with patience.

CCXXVI. BARABBAS PREFERRED TO JESUS

Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would. And he had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas. They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release unto you: Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ? ... But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas and make Jesus away.—Then cried they all again, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas.—Pilate saith to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? They say all: Let him be crucified. The governor said to them: Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let him be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 15-20. John xviii. 40. Matt. xxvii. 22-23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to understand the wickedness of sin and give you a great hatred for it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how bitterly the Jews humiliated Jesus the God of infinite majesty and holiness, by preferring to Him one who was a vile robber and murderer. And yet if you have ever committed a mortal sin, you too have outraged Our Lord in a similar, or perhaps, worse manner. You know Him to be your God, your Saviour, your supreme Benefactor who died because He loved you; and still when you had to choose between Him and some vile passion, between Him and the devil, you despised Him and preferred the vile passion. How can you ever repent enough of such a deed, of such black ingratitude? How can you ever humble yourself enough for this before God and man? When will you ever do enough to atone for it; when thank Our Lord sufficiently for still loving you so much?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Heart of Jesus must have suffered when He heard the Jews clamouring for His crucifixion. They were His own people. He had chosen them from amongst all the nations. He had overwhelmed them with His favours. If I feel horrified at such ingratitude let me remember that it has perhaps been also mine. At that moment Our Lord thought of me, and perhaps I was one of those who tore His loving Heart with grief. If not, let me thank God, and resolve with His grace never to be guilty of such shameful ingratitude.

CCXXVII. THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water washed his hands before the people saying : I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it. And the whole people answering, said : His blood be upon us and upon our children. Then he released to them Barabbas : and having scourged Jesus, delivered him unto them to be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 24-26).

Humbly ask to know and love Jesus better, and to be inspired with a true spirit of penance.

1ST POINT.—Consider the cruelty and injustice of Pilate's sentence. Scourging was a torture inflicted only on slaves and the lowest criminals. It was so cruel that those who underwent it, often died under it or remained crippled for life. And it is this torture to which Pilate, out of pure cowardice, condemns Jesus, while at the same time he proclaims His innocence. And Our Lord accepts all this for our sake. No rope, no chain would have been strong enough to keep Him bound to this column of shame and suffering, had not the greatness of His love for us subdued all His repugnance. How badly we repay Him, when a little difficulty or unpleasantness is enough to keep us from doing our duty. Thank Our Lord, pity Him and resolve to do better in future.

2ND POINT.—Represent to yourself that terrible scourging. Imagine you hear the blows falling again and again on the innocent Jesus. Picture to yourself His whole sacred Body torn by those cruel scourges which add wound to wound ; and see the blood of your Saviour streaming down on all sides and bespattering the walls. Excite in your heart a deep compassion for Him who is suffering all this for you. Ask His pardon for the part you have had by your sins in inflicting these torments upon Him, and work up in your heart an intense hatred for the sins of sensuality and impurity which are the chief cause of these torments.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the soldiers at last untie the ropes that bind Jesus to the pillar, and Our Lord, His Body one mass of wounds, falls to the ground in a pool of His own blood. Remember how your Lord and God has thus spent Himself to atone for your sins, to snatch you from hell, and to make you His child that you may be sanctified and one day obtain the happiness of heaven. What will you do for Him in return ? Will you not labour your best to save and sanctify both your own soul and those of others for which Jesus has borne so much ?

CCXXVIII. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto him the whole band. And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plating a crown of

thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying : Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed and struck his head (Matt. xxvii. 27-30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know how much He has loved you that you may love Him with all your heart.

1ST POINT.—Contemplate the scene of the crowning with thorns. Try to understand how painful all this must have been to Jesus already in a dying condition from the horrible scourging. Think of these thorns digging deeper and deeper into His sacred Head. Think of the cruel blows which renew each time the pain of all His wounds. Think of the shameful humiliations those vile soldiers inflict upon Him ; their bitter mockery, their spitting in His face. And remember that we too had our share in these ghastly proceedings. By our wicked thoughts we crowned Jesus with thorns and drove them deep into that sacred Head. By offending Him and breaking His laws under His very eyes we too have mocked Him, have despised His kingship and Godhead. Let us repent then, and ask pardon while renewing our hatred of sin. Let us also thank Our Lord for having taken upon Himself the pains we have deserved.

2ND POINT.—Consider the manner in which Jesus endures all these indignities : how courageously, without once shrinking ; how patiently, without a word of complaint or thought of anger against the hatred of the Jews, the cruelty of the soldiers, or the cowardice and injustice of Pilate ; how humbly without even a look of reproach at His tormentors. To glorify His heavenly Father, He is willing to bear all these outrages, to be the outcast of the people, to become a worm and no man. The One who allows Himself to be thus reviled is the God of infinite Majesty ; and He does so all out of love for us. Compare with these sufferings and humiliations of your Saviour, your own sufferings and humiliations : how insignificant they become. And besides we are only poor sinners who can never be humbled enough. Compare also the manner in which Jesus accepts His sufferings with your own way of meeting humiliations. How soon you are disheartened, how easily you grow impatient, angry or revengeful. Humble yourself and take resolutions on this point.

CCXXIX. ECCE HOMO-BEHOLD THE MAN

Pilate therefore went forth again and saith to them : Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him. (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them : Behold the Man. When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants had seen him, they cried out, saying : Crucify him, Crucify him (John xix. 4-6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your love for Him and to help you to follow in His footsteps.

1ST POINT.—Picture to yourself Our Lord presented to the Jews by Pilate. How truly He is the Man of sorrows. His head crowned with thorns ; His adorable face, disfigured by the blows and soiled with the spittle of those vile soldiers ; His hands bound ; His whole body trembling with weakness and covered with wounds. Think how dearly He has bought all the graces He now lavishes upon you, and learn to value them and never to squander what has cost your good Saviour so dearly.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Pilate : “ Behold the Man.” Jesus is indeed your God, yet in order to suffer all this for you He became man ; how much He has loved you. See what you can do in return in order to prove your love for Him. Do you get annoyed at anything that troubles your comfort or causes you some little pain or humiliation ? If so, how little you love Him who deserves your love so much. Resolve to do better in future.

3RD POINT.—Consider the beautiful lesson of humility, patience and zeal for souls which Our Lord gives you here. You are one of His chosen disciples, and you ought to profit by His holy lessons. Compare your manner of accepting humiliation and suffering with the wonderful example He sets you. Resolve to imitate Him generously.



CCXXX. THE JEWS DEMAND THE DEATH OF JESUS

But they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified.—Pilate saith to them : Take him you, and crucify him : for I find no cause in him. The Jews answered him : We have a law ; and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again ; and he said to Jesus : Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to him : Speakest thou not to me ? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee ? Jesus answered : Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered me to thee hath the greater sin. And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying : If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. Now when Pilate had heard these words...he delivered him to them to be crucified (Luke xxiii. 23. John xix. 6-13, 16).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with great generosity in the fulfilment of your good resolutions.

1ST POINT.—Consider Pilate's manner of acting. Six times he proclaims Jesus innocent, but instead of releasing Him as he plainly saw it was his duty to do, he finds all sorts of pretexts by which to appease his conscience and at the same time please the Jews whom he personally hates and despises. In the meantime, of what great injustice he is guilty, and what terrible sufferings he causes Jesus to endure. By acting in this manner Pilate neither appeases his conscience nor satisfies the Jews. You surely find such conduct cowardly and shameful ; and yet when, knowing your duty clearly, you try to compromise between your conscience and your sensuality or pride, you do exactly the same thing. How often has this made you fall into serious faults by which you offended God and harmed your own soul. We cannot serve two masters. Choose, and take resolutions.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Jewish priests conduct themselves. They are the chosen ones of God ; they are the guardians of the Holy Scriptures ; they know what is said in

them about the Redeemer. But pride, hatred, and envy have completely blinded them ; they refuse to inquire into the claims Jesus has to their allegiance ; they only think of satisfying their evil passions. Behold what unmortified passions, even in persons consecrated to God, bring about : they stifle reason and faith and every good feeling in those that indulge them, they finally bring their souls to utter ruin. What they have done in so many others, they might also do in you. Have you not reason then to keep them in check ? Review your resolutions on this point.

CCXXXI. JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha...and he said to the Jews : Behold your king. But they cried out : Away with him : Away with him : Crucify him. Pilate saith to them : Shall I crucify your king ? The chief priests answered : We have no king but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified (John xix. 13-16).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand His great love for you and to help you to love Him in return.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Pilate stifles the voice of conscience for fear of displeasing Cæsar. How much better it would have been if, instead, he had feared offending God. He might then have become a saint, whilst now he lost the favour of the emperor he feared to offend, and the terrible punishment of God fell upon him. He was sent into exile, and there perished miserably. Surely there is only one thing worth striving after, to please God ; and but one thing to be feared, to offend Him. Be convinced of this and act accordingly.

2ND POINT.—Consider this condemnation of Our Lord to the death of the Cross. How unjust it was, pronounced by a judge fully recognising the innocence of the condemned. How cruel it was, the death of the cross was a death of unspeakable torments. How ignominious it was, a death of extreme degradation reserved for the vilest malefactors. And still Our Lord accepts all these sufferings, all that shame and

injustice from the hands of His heavenly Father and out of love for us. Learn then from your Divine Master to accept as from God's hands and out of love for Jesus all the wrongs done you, since they are so very few in comparison with what He endured for your sake.

3RD POINT.—Consider those dreadful words of the Jews : His blood be upon us and upon our children. A few years later these words were fulfilled in a terrible manner when the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation for ever and over a million Jews perished in the war while about a hundred thousand were sold as slaves. Think how terrible will be on the last day the punishment of those who have rejected the grace of God, and who by mortal sin have turned the Blood of their Saviour into the cause of their condemnation. Resolve firmly to hate sin from this moment and to avoid all that may lead to it.

CCXXXII. JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

Picture to yourselves the enemies of Jesus putting a heavy cross on His bleeding shoulders.

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you the true value of the cross, and to help you to esteem and love it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus accepts with love the cross on which He is to suffer so much and to die. To die on the cross He had come into this world. He had years before offered Himself in the Temple through the hands of Mary as a victim of atonement for the sins of men. His whole life had been one of suffering, but the love of His Heart was not content till He could accomplish His sacrifice in all its fulness. Learn from this what it is to love. The sacrifices you make for the sake of Jesus in the fulfilment of your duties are also the measure of your love towards Him. Are you generous in returning love for love ? If you have not been so in the past, resolve to prove your love for Jesus in the future by your generosity.

2ND POINT.—Consider that if Jesus had only looked at the suffering and shame of the cross, and the malice of His enemies who imposed it on Him, He could never have loved it. But He saw in it a means of atoning for our sins, a means of

acquiring merits for us, a means for drawing our hearts to Him and for glorifying His heavenly Father ; and hence He lovingly embraced it. If we accept the cross as Jesus accepted it, with humility and perfect submission to God's holy will, it will bear in us also similar fruits. Through the merits of our Saviour, it will purify our souls, atone for our past offences, help us to acquire great treasures for heaven, unite us more closely to Jesus, and give great glory to our heavenly Father. If we look at the cross from this, the only true point of view, we too shall be able to love it and to embrace it courageously. Whereas if we do not love it, if we shun it, or grumble against the suffering and humiliation it brings along with it, we only show that we have not yet learned true wisdom, and have only seen the pain and shame of the cross and the malice of those who make us suffer. Ponder over this and then recall to mind how the cross well borne will be one day the source of eternal happiness. Resolve not to miss the occasions of suffering something for Our Lord.

CCXXXIII. JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME UNDER THE CROSS

Represent to yourself Our Lord carrying His heavy cross and falling beneath its weight.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to resolve on spending yourself in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how heavily this big cross presses on the shoulders of Jesus, already so terribly torn by the scourging. Look how painfully He advances under this heavy load, each step renewing all His sufferings, each step marked by blood. It is for you He suffers all this ; your sins have made His cross so heavy. May these reflections excite in your breast feelings of compassion, repentance, love and gratitude.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus carries His cross without any consolation. He is surrounded by His enemies who are pleased at His sufferings. The rough Roman soldiers drag Him along, push Him, goad Him on without pity ; while His disciples remain afar off from shame and fear. As He advances all His pains grow more violent. Compare your humiliations

and sufferings with those of Jesus ; how trifling they are. And yet all around you sympathize with you, console you by their affection, and try by every means in their power to diminish your pain. Besides you must recognise that on account of your sins you have deserved to suffer and to be humbled much more, and still you perhaps grumble or are displeased and impatient. Place the example of Jesus before yourself and resolve to imitate Him better.

3RD POINT.—Consider how painfully Our Lord must have felt being deserted by the disciples whom He had loved so well. How truly does the Imitation of Christ say that Jesus finds many lovers of His heavenly kingdom but few that will carry His cross ; all are ready to rejoice with Him, but few prepared to suffer with Him. Till to-day, perhaps, you too have no love for the cross ; even the most trifling suffering or humiliation is an object of horror which you studiously seek to avoid. If so, can you really call yourself a disciple of Jesus ? Excite yourself to greater generosity towards Him who has loved you so much.

CCXXXIV. JESUS MEETS HIS AFLICTED MOTHER

Represent to yourself the sorrowful meeting of the Son and the Mother.

Humbly ask God the grace of knowing Jesus and Mary better and of loving them more sincerely.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Mary on hearing of her Son's condemnation resolved at once on joining Him and sharing all His sufferings and humiliations. St. John, who like the other Apostles had fled at first, now animated by Mary's example of love and courage, took heart again and went with her to meet Our Lord and share in His passion till the end. May the example of Mary encourage me also to take up bravely for Jesus' sake all the difficulties and humiliations of my calling.

2ND POINT.—Consider how agonizing this meeting must have been both for Mother and Son. Agonizing for Mary who saw her Divine Son disfigured by the torments He had endured, dragging Himself along under the weight of the cross, insulted, blasphemed, mercilessly ill-treated by His bitter enemies.

Agonizing for Jesus who saw His holy Mother broken-hearted with grief and anguish. Compassionate them and repent for the part your sins had in inflicting these torments upon them. Together with Mary try to console your Saviour, and to compensate by your love and reverence for all He has to endure from the ingratitude of men.

3RD POINT.—Consider how neither Jesus nor Mary shrink from the terrible sacrifice. They accept it together, and together with loving hearts offer it in reparation for the dishonour done to God by sin, and to obtain the salvation of souls. Think how Jesus wishes to enlist your services also for the great work He came into the world to perform. It is a special grace He offers you. But not to disappoint His high expectations, you must, with Mary, take your share in the cross of your Divine Saviour. Resolve then to accept bravely the trials God sends you, to bear them patiently in union with Jesus and thus to atone for your own offences and for the faults of others.

CCXXXV. SIMON THE CYRENEAN HELPS TO CARRY THE CROSS

And as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country. And they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus (Luke xxiii. 26).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may learn to esteem the cross highly and to love it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the soldiers in forcing Simon to carry the cross were not prompted by any feelings of mercy or compassion. Their action was one of brutal violence and injustice done to a peaceful unoffending person. Simon, not knowing Jesus, could only see the disgrace of carrying a cross for a condemned man, and feel the heavy burden laid upon his shoulders. But behold the ways of Providence. That very cross brought Simon into contact with Jesus, and made Jesus known to him; it led him to become a disciple of Our Lord, and thus proved a germ of holiness. Turning to yourself, reflect how some pain or humiliation, inflicted unjustly and even perhaps with a wicked intention by men, may be, in the intentions of divine Providence, a means of drawing you nearer to

Jesus and of sanctifying you. If properly accepted, this cross will purify your heart, detach it from the things of this world, help to turn its affections more fervently to God and things heavenly, unite you more closely to Jesus the source of all good, and earn for you an immense reward in heaven. Let me then accept my cross, my difficulties of every day, as God would like me to do ; patiently, with perfect submission to His divine will, lovingly and courageously for His sake.

2ND POINT.—Consider how happy Simon must have been when later he learned who Jesus was. What a great honour and privilege he must have accounted it, to have been allowed to help in carrying the cross of his Divine Master. What a consolation must this thought have been at the moment of death ; and now in heaven what a source of joy and eternal gratitude. So will the cross be one day for you, if you carry it for Jesus' sake.

CCXXXVI. VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Represent to yourself Our Lord tottering forward under the weight of the cross, His face covered with blood and sweat. The holy woman Veronica comes through the crowd, and with deep veneration, compassion and love wipes that adorable face. Our Lord to reward her leaves His features imprinted on the towel with which she performed this act of devotion.

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a tender devotion to His Sacred Passion.

1ST POINT.—Consider that there were many in the crowd who had received benefits from Our Lord and who even still believed in Him. No one, however, either through shame or fear, came forward to offer any help or consolation. How keenly the loving Heart of Jesus must have felt this. To-day still the same thing happens in the case of many. They wish to love Our Lord, but the fear of difficulties or human respect prevents them from fulfilling their duty. Perhaps this has been, or is even now, your own case. You know how much you owe your Saviour, but does not sensuality or pride prevent your carrying out Our Lord's wishes? If so, beg His pardon and promise to act more bravely in future.

2ND POINT.—Consider the beautiful example of this holy woman. According to tradition she was a woman of rank and refinement; however, she did not shrink from being despised by the enemies of Jesus, nor from being roughly handled by the soldiers. She bravely came forward and with great respect wiped the bloodstained face of her Divine Lord. Do not stop at admiring her courage, but resolve to imitate it, so that no difficulty, no opinions or jeers of others may keep you back from doing what you know to be your duty.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord showed the pleasure this act of reverence and love gave Him by working a miracle, imprinting His features on the towel Veronica had used. How Veronica must have treasured this gift. How all her life long the contemplation of that adorable face so cruelly wounded and disfigured, must have kept aglow in her heart the love for Jesus! Remember how you too please Our Lord by every act of devotedness offered in His name, and especially every time you overcome some difficulty or suffer some humiliation for His sake. Ask Jesus to imprint deep in your heart the remembrance of His passion and to increase in your heart the love you ought to have for Him who is so good and kind.

CCXXXVII. OUR LORD FALLS A SECOND TIME UNDER THE CROSS

Represent to yourself Our Lord falling under the burden of His cross.

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart the resolution of making generous efforts to advance in perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider Our Lord carrying that heavy cross on His bruised shoulders. It is for you; it is to save and sanctify you that He carries it; it is for your sake that He endures all those torments and all those outrages. He has spared Himself no pain in order to sanctify you; He has thought nothing too hard, too humiliating, provided it can help you on the way to heaven. And you perhaps shrink from striving after perfection, the one thing necessary for you, because you find it too difficult. What then are the difficulties you must overcome and the humiliations you must endure to become a saint in comparison with what Jesus suffered to enable you to be one.

2ND POINT.—Consider Jesus falling again under the weight of the cross. Think how He has exhausted all His human strength in labouring for you, and then reflect who He is who loves you thus. O, how little worthy you are of such love ! What return then of love and gratitude can you make which would be sufficient ? , How gladly you should be ready to spend all your strength in His service. Ask Him pardon for your lack of generosity in the past and promise to do better in the future.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the rough soldiers beat and drag Our Lord without mercy in order to make Him rise again. How cruel they are. Yet they may in some way be excused, for they did not know Jesus. Whilst, when we added to His torments and disgrace, we well knew He was infinite in majesty and holiness, that He was our Saviour, and that He was suffering to save us from eternal perdition. How shamefully ungrateful we have been, and how wonderfully merciful is the Heart of Jesus which in spite of everything continues to love us and to load us with favours. Resolve to serve Jesus more generously for the future.

CCXXXVIII. THE HOLY WOMEN WEEP OVER JESUS

And there followed him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said : Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me ; but weep for yourselves and for your children....For if in the greenwood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry ? (Luke xxiii. 27-28, 31).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may conceive a deep sorrow for your sins and a firm purpose to atone for them.

1ST POINT.—Consider how these women wept out of compassion for Jesus, whom they knew to be so good and so holy and whom they saw suffering so terribly. I know much better than they did that Jesus is my dearest Friend, my Father, my Saviour, my Lord and my God ; and that it is for my sake He suffers. How many more reasons have I than these women to compassionate Jesus in His pains, and especially to be sorry for the share I had in causing them !

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus teaches me to atone for my sins. It is to expiate my sins that He takes upon Himself all these humiliations, whilst perhaps I, who have deserved them, am reluctant to bear the slightest disregard, reproof or correction. It is to expiate my sins that Jesus endures all these torments on the way to Calvary, whilst perhaps I, who have so richly deserved to be punished, cannot put up with the slightest cross without grumbling. It is to expiate my sins that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is broken with sorrow, whilst perhaps I repent so little of them. Let me then follow the advice of Jesus to the women of Jerusalem:—Weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. Resolve to atone sincerely for your past sins.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus:—If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry? If Our Lord, the sinless and well-beloved Son of God, has to undergo such terrible punishments for sins He has not committed, but in atonement for which He has offered Himself as a Victim, how dreadful will be the fate of the sinners themselves who neglect to profit of God's mercy by timely repentance and penance.

CCXXXIX. JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME UNDER THE CROSS

Represent to yourself Our Lord utterly exhausted lying beneath the weight of the cross.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with true generosity in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider Jesus falling a third time under the cross and rising again in order to suffer still more. What a beautiful example of constancy for us, who are so easily disheartened when there is some pain to suffer or some humiliation to bear. What then is it that gives Our Lord strength to carry that dreadful cross so courageously? It is His love for His Heavenly Father, for whose glory He is ready to sacrifice Himself entirely; it is His love for the souls of men. On the other hand, what is it that makes us shrink from the smallest trials? It is the weakness of our love for God our Lord, and

the strength of our self-love. Think then how worthy God is that we should do and sacrifice everything for Him, and by this consideration strive to excite greater love in your heart.

* 2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus in carrying His cross to the end fulfilled the wish of His heavenly Father that He should in this manner redeem the world. He was nailed to it and died on it, thus completing a most difficult act of obedience performed with the greatest love and exactitude, down to the very smallest detail. How easy in comparison are the acts of obedience and the duties God imposes upon us, and still perhaps we perform them grudgingly, perhaps grumble at them, or, shrinking from the hardships they entail, neglect them altogether. I should feel ashamed of my want of generosity, sincerely repent of it and resolve firmly to do with a loving heart all that God demands of me.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus after this third fall, with the little human strength left him, rises and proceeds on His way to Calvary, there to die a most cruel death. As long as He has a single drop of blood to shed, as long as there remains any sacrifice to be made, His love for us is not satisfied. He must give all He can for our sake. After all this, ought we not to be ashamed of ourselves if we shrink from every sacrifice that our duties imply, and always seek our own ease and comfort instead of the greater glory of God ?

CCXL. JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. And (having stripped him) they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. But he took it not (John xiv. 17. Mark xv. 23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in you a true repentance for your sins and an intense love towards Himself.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord had carried His cross under the burning noonday sun. His garments had in consequence stuck to His wounds, and when the soldiers rudely tore them off, all the wounds were re-opened and the torments of the scourging renewed. Thus Our Lord expiates in His

own most innocent body our sins of sensuality. Think of the share you had in inflicting these new torments on your Saviour. Repent of it, resolve to atone for it, and excite in your heart a great horror for all sensuality and impurity.

2ND POINT.—Consider how wine mixed with myrrh was offered to Jesus, but He refused it. It was the custom to give this kind of drink to those who had to be crucified. It benumbed their senses and thus made them feel less the unspeakable tortures of the crucifixion. Our Lord refused it, because He wished to suffer without alleviation all that could be suffered to atone for the sins of men. Do I share in this desire of atonement? I may have often and grievously offended God. What do I do in reparation? Do I at least bear the little trials which God sends me, with becoming patience?

3RD POINT.—Consider how the soldiers, with the intention of lessening the tortures of the crucifixion, gave Our Lord this very bitter and repulsive drink. Their action fitly represents those doings of ours by which we wish to glorify God, but which are so full of imperfections and faults as almost entirely to spoil them. We pray, but with what negligence? we study or work, but perhaps with some intention of vain glory or ambition; we obey, yet how reluctantly, if not actually grumbling against our superiors or criticising them. Often and often perhaps we have thus mixed bitter myrrh to the wine we offered Our Lord. How rightly then He expects you to console Him now by your fervour, and to make reparation for your past sins. Take good resolutions for the future.

CCXLI. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there.... And Jesus said : Father, forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke xxiii 33-34).

Humbly ask Our Lord that you may know more clearly His great love for you and love Him better in return.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the cruel executioners rudely order Jesus to stretch out His hands and feet that they may nail them to the cross, and how meekly He obeys their orders. He gives Himself completely into their hands without a word

of reproach or complaint. It is for you He submits to these horrible tortures. He could escape them in a hundred ways ; but He wishes to suffer, that you may be spared the punishments of hell, that you may become a child of God and be happy one day in heaven. How much you owe Him. What worthy return can you make for so much love. And yet, all Our Lord asks of you is that you should put yourself into His hands and submit in all things to His holy will. Can you be so ungrateful as to refuse to do this ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the executioners brutally pull Jesus' hands and feet. Listen to the strokes of the hammers as they fall on the nails. See the blood gushing forth from the gaping wounds in the hands and feet of the Divine Victim. His whole body is quivering under the torture. This is the very Son of God, infinitely worthy of all honour and reverence, who willingly bears all for your sake ; and still, when He asks you only to do your duty, how often perhaps you find it too much or too hard. Humbly repent of your want of love and resolve to do better.

3RD POINT.—Listen to the words of Our Lord whilst they are nailing Him to the cross :—Father, He says, forgive them for they know not what they do. He could, in all justice, have called down the vengeance of heaven upon His wicked enemies ; but instead, He asks pardon for them, He excuses them as well as He can. How different it is with us who at the least provocation, the least hasty word, the slightest wrong done us, wish to return evil for evil. Reflect how this wonderful mercy of Jesus towards His cruel executioners is our confidence and our hope. We too, if we have sinned mortally, had our share in nailing Him to the cross, yet when we hear His prayer, we cannot but renew our confidence in His Sacred Heart so full of mercy and so ready to forgive.

CCXLII. JESUS HANGING ON THE CROSS

Represent to yourself Jesus covered with wounds hanging on the cross.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to understand better the greatness of His love for you so that you may be aroused to love Him with your whole heart in return.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus hanging from the cross has made the entire sacrifice of His body and His life. From head to foot He is covered with gaping wounds ; His head is crowned with thorns, His face swollen from the blows, His hands and feet pierced with nails, His whole body torn by the scourges. And it is for me His ungrateful and sinful creature that He has been reduced to this state. What then are the little sacrifices He asks from me in comparison with all He has borne? How gladly should I spend myself for His sake even at the cost of health and life.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord on the cross has sacrificed His dearest affections. He knew that, when He would deliver Himself into the hands of His enemies, one of His Apostles would betray Him, another deny Him, and all abandon Him. He knew how His holy Mother's heart would be pierced with a sword of sorrow, and how the anguish of her heart would tear His own. He knew that His chosen people whom He loved so well would turn against Him. He foresaw how thousands and thousands would repay all He was doing and suffering for them with the blackest ingratitude. He foresaw the vast numbers that would be eternally lost despite His cruel sufferings and death. And notwithstanding, He was willing to accept all these sorrows, and sacrificed for my sake His most legitimate affections. Shall I love Him so little as to refuse some little sacrifice of my affections, shrink from it and allow it to keep me back from the fulfilment of my duties ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus on the cross sacrificed for our sake all the goods of this world, and in particular His honour and reputation. How poor He is. His poverty on the cross is still greater than at Bethlehem. He hangs there utterly destitute of all comfort and relief in His sufferings. His honour and good name are entirely shattered. In the middle of the day, during the festival of the Pasch when thousands of people have flocked to Jerusalem and will carry His shame to the ends of the earth, He dies as a malefactor, a blasphemer, a deceiver, crucified between two thieves, mocked and outraged in His very agony. He who is God of all holiness and of infinite majesty is thus ignominiously treated. It is for my sake ; it is to atone for my sins that He has willingly sacrificed all that the world esteems ; and yet I love Him so little. Miserable sinner that I am to refuse to put up with some small humiliations ! Let me admire the wonderful love that inspired such a sacrifice and thank Jesus for it with all my heart, offering Him my good resolutions for the future.

CCXLIII. MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Represent to yourself Mount Calvary with the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross.

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your love, confidence and gratitude towards His holy Mother.

1ST POINT.—Consider the intense sorrow which pierced the heart of that loving Mother when she witnessed the terrible sufferings of her Son, and the insults and mockery with which His enemies were embittering His very agony. Her grief was rendered still greater from the fact that she had not the consolation of bringing Him the slightest relief. To understand the fulness of Mary's sorrow, it would be necessary to understand how much the Mother loved her Son and Divine Lord. Compassionate your holy Mother, remembering that she suffers for your sake.

2ND POINT.—Consider how great a sacrifice God demanded of Mary and how generously and courageously she offered it. Although it filled her heart with unspeakable anguish, yet it was with her full consent that Jesus suffered and died on the cross. She had learned from her Divine Son to place the holy will of God and His glory far above her own temporal interests, her personal happiness and affections. The love of God was her strength. If we are still so often wanting in generosity, if we shrink from the least sacrifices, and thus fall into sin or lag behind on the way of perfection, it is because we do not realise how great and good God is, and therefore how worthy He is that we should give up everything for His sake. It is also because, on the other hand, we do not realise how little we are and how insignificant our temporal interests if compared to the interests of God's glory. Let us ask our holy Mother with fervour to help us to understand this better.

3RD POINT.—Consider how, when Mary stood at the foot of the cross and witnessed the agony of her Divine Son, she perceived more clearly the value of the graces she had received, which likewise were the fruits of His sacred Passion. This thought filled her heart with the deepest gratitude and inflamed it with still greater love for Jesus. We too have received and still daily receive great graces from God. The thought that Our Lord has bought them so dearly ought to excite in our hearts deep sentiments of gratitude and love, and strengthen our determination of never losing gifts of such value, and the occasions God puts on our path of acquiring them more and more.

CCXLIV. THE CRUCIFIXION

And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there : and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left...And one of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed him, saying : If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying : Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly : for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus : Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him : Amen I say to thee : This day thou shalt be with me in paradise (Luke xxii. 32, 33, 39-43).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to accept properly and to sanctify your cross.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus willingly accepted for our sake the new humiliation of being crucified between two malefactors just as if He had been the greatest of them :—“with the wicked He was reputed.” And perhaps I, wretched sinner as I am, cannot bear to be found fault with, and resent the lightest blame. How much I have still to learn in order to be the true disciple of Jesus.

2ND POINT.—Consider the two malefactors crucified with Jesus. They are suffering for their crimes. In the case of one of them those sufferings do not help him to atone for his sinful life ; he uselessly rebels against them ; they make him angry, and he pours out his hatred and bitter feelings on Jesus by insulting Him. The other, on the contrary, recognises humbly that he deserves the sufferings he has to endure ; they lead him to repentance and make him turn to Jesus for mercy. By acting as he did, the first did not escape the cross, but made it more unbearable, whilst the other, by accepting his pains as a just punishment from the hands of God was consoled and relieved in his sufferings. When we have something to suffer, let us acknowledge that we deserve no better on account of our former sins. If we do so, and humbly accept the cross from God's hands, what an excellent means it becomes of purifying our hearts, and of rendering the cross lighter. If not, we make the cross heavier and not only lose merit, but frequently commit new offences.

3RD POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord to the penitent thief :—This day thou shalt be with me in paradise. How many have thus been brought by the cross to repent of their sins, and to throw themselves on the mercy of their Saviour. How many have thus found in humiliation and suffering a powerful means of salvation and sanctification. If then God sends me some cross, let me not lose such a precious gift by impatience or anger.

CCXLV. BEHOLD THY MOTHER

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother : Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple : Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own (John xix. 25-27).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase in your heart your love of and confidence in Mary.

1ST POINT.—Consider the wonderful gift Jesus made to St. John, and in his person to us all, by giving us Mary as our Mother. She is a Mother so holy, so wise, who loves us with the same heart with which she loved her Divine Son ; a Mother so merciful because she has learned from Jesus to love sinners ; a Mother who having suffered so much can well understand all our sorrows ; a Mother so powerful with God that she can help us in all our needs. Thank God most heartily for this great gift and resolve to take advantage of it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus by these words, “ Behold thy Mother ” wished to recommend Mary to the filial care of His beloved disciple, and again in his person, to us all. Mary had loved her Divine Son so well, she had lived only for Him, and now for the glory of God and the salvation of souls she offered with Him the sacrifice of the Cross ; and Jesus wished it in turn to be part of her reward that all His disciples should love her as His and their Mother. When we think what Mary is to Jesus, and what she has done and sacrificed for us, shall we not gladly conform to the wish of our dying Saviour by a tender devotion towards her, who is in every manner so worthy of it ?

3RD POINT.—Consider these words : “ And from this hour the disciple took her as his own.” St. John honoured her ; he loved her ; he consoled her ; he took care of all her interests ; he confided to her all his joys and his sorrows as a dutiful son would do to the worthiest of mothers. Reflect how you can imitate the beloved disciple by the deep respect with which you speak to her in prayer, the confidence you show her, your zeal for her honour, the care you take not to offend her by offending her Divine Son, your earnest endeavours to gladden her loving heart by your practice of virtue. Take firm resolutions to honour Mary more in future.

CCXLVI. THE AGONY OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying : Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani ? That is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? (Matt. xxvii. 45-46).

Humbly ask Our Lord to reveal to you the treasures of His Sacred Heart, and inspire you with love and confidence towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider Our Lord hanging on the cross during these three hours of silent agony. All this time, He was praying for men and was offering for them the unspeakable tortures He was enduring. He was thinking of you ; He had before His eyes all your sins and all the ingratitude you would show Him. How much more He suffered at this thought. Yet at the same time He thought of how He would pardon you. With a heart full of love He was preparing the graces He would give you in order to make you His child and to enrich you with heavenly treasures so that one day you might share with Him the happiness of heaven. How He longed that you should profit by these graces, that you should not waste them but on the contrary respond to them by giving Him your heart. Examine yourself and see how you respond to your Saviour's love and His merciful desires in your regard.

2ND POINT.—Consider how during the agony of Jesus all creation is struck with horror and shame at man's wickedness ; for it is man who by his sins has thus outraged and tortured

unto death the Son of God. Reflect on the share you had in this, and then strike your breast in deep and sincere repentance for having so cruelly offended the Lord of infinite majesty, your Creator and Saviour.

3RD POINT.—Think of the bitter anguish that wrung from Jesus those words: “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Indeed the keenest grief of Our Lord’s terrible passion was His abandonment by His heavenly Father. Jesus was left to suffer, in a manner we cannot understand, all the weight of His Father’s wrath against sin, in order that we might better realise all its wickedness and be filled with a holy horror of it. Our Lord also desired to suffer this torment for the consolation of those souls who without any fault of their own would be tried by darkness and desolation, so that they might learn from Him how to sanctify their sufferings by throwing themselves confidently into the arms of their all-merciful God.

CCXLVII. THE SOLDIERS OFFER JESUS VINEGAR TO DRINK

Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said : I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there, full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth (John xiv. 28, 29).

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a great love towards Him and an ardent zeal for souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider the cruel thirst Jesus endures on the cross. Since the previous night, He had had nothing to drink ; He had been carrying His heavy cross under a blazing sun, which together with the loss of blood caused His whole body to burn with high fever. Thus Jesus was willing to expiate the sins of sensuality and especially all excess in drink which leads so many men to sin and eternal perdition.

2ND POINT.—Consider that besides this bodily thirst, another and still more burning thirst was consuming the Heart of our dying Saviour. It was the thirst for the love of men, and

in particular for our own love, the love of those especially consecrated to Him. How ardently He longs for it ; how earnestly He wishes that, ceasing to offend Him, we should give Him our whole heart by the practice of charity, humility, purity, obedience and all truly christian virtues. Often perhaps, like the Roman soldiers, we have responded to His desires only by giving Him vinegar, that is, increasing His sufferings by our ingratitude.

3RD POINT.—Consider how our dying Saviour was also thirsting for souls. It was to save them that He had become man, that He had led a life of privations and labour, and that He was now enduring such torments and giving His life. And He saw that nevertheless many would be lost, and this thought to the last filled His loving Heart with anguish. Shall we not do all we can to quench that thirst of our Saviour, we especially, His priests in whom He has placed so much confidence ? Shall we allow souls to perish through our want of generosity and devotedness, through our negligence or carelessness ?

CCXLVIII. AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen (John xix. 25).

Humbly ask Our Lord to strengthen your determination of remaining faithful to Him to the end.

1ST POINT.—Consider how few of the disciples of Jesus were near Him on Calvary. Surely His loving Heart must have felt this intensely. Still many believed in Him, many loved Him and grieved over His sufferings and death ; but shame and fear held them back from acknowledging Him as their Lord. When the multitudes were thronging around Him and glorified Him for His teaching and miracles, then all were eager to follow Him ; but now that He was as the last of men and the outcast of the people, now that He was dying on the cross they kept aloof from shame and fear. How many of the followers of Jesus act in the same manner still to-day. As long as they can find their own pleasure in serving Him, they gladly follow Him ; but when He would lead them on the road to Calvary and to the cross their courage fails them. They

cannot bring themselves to renounce the esteem of men, to be humiliated with Jesus ; they shrink from the mortification of the senses ; they shirk the efforts required to conquer themselves. How feeble is their love. Examine yourself on this matter.

2ND POINT.—Consider Mary Magdalen at the foot of the cross. She recalls to mind all Jesus has done for her : how she was on the way to hell and how He rescued her ; how, when she was despised by all, He alone did not abandon her, but showed Himself full of mercy ; how, since He had pardoned her, He had never a word of reproach for her past misdeeds, but had never ceased to grant her new graces. And now she sees at what an immense cost she has been redeemed ; how dearly have been bought those abundant graces which she has received ; and her heart is overwhelmed with repentance for the share she has had in the sufferings and death of Our Lord. She is also filled with the deepest gratitude, so that there is nothing she would not willingly do for Him. Far from shrinking from humiliation and suffering, she will share in all His shame and torments. When I think of what Jesus has done for me should not these feelings of Magdalen be also mine ?

CCXLIX. JESUS IS BLASPHEMED ON THE CROSS

And they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying : Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days buildest it up again : Save thyself, coming down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests, mocking said with the scribes one to another : He saved others ; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the king of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe (Mark xv. 29-32).

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in you a great love for Him and an ardent zeal for His glory.

1ST POINT.—Conder how the enemies of Jesus do not relent in their hatred towards Him. They try to embitter even His last moments by their blasphemies and mockeries. Reflect how low these men have fallen. They had been chosen by God to be His priests, the guardians of religion and the spiritual guides of the people ; yet their hearts are hardened in sin. It is pride that has brought them to this. Think of the evil fruits pride might produce in your heart, if you do not take care to

subdue it. Since the Passion of Our Lord it has produced the same effect in more than one priest who had begun well, but who through pride became an enemy to His Saviour and loaded Him with outrages. Resolve to combat this vice bravely by the constant practice of humility.

2ND POINT.—Consider how many present at the death of Our Lord scarcely knew Him and bore towards Him neither love nor hatred. Thoughtless curiosity had brought them there; they looked on and remained unmoved. All the sufferings of Jesus and His wonderful examples of patience, meekness and fortitude failed to touch them. Even when darkness spread over the earth, and the ground trembled under their feet, signs of the wrath of God, they remained quite indifferent. We naturally feel indignant at their callousness; but what should we think of ourselves, who know and recognise Jesus as our God and Saviour, if neither His sufferings and death, nor the great proof of love He has given us on the cross can arouse us from our carelessness and sloth? What should we think of ourselves, when even the fear of God's anger leaves us unmoved?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus even today has enemies all over the world who keep on outraging and hating Him. While they do all they can to ruin His work, ought we not to be aroused to an ardent desire of making reparation and to a great zeal for those souls whom He loves so dearly and for whose salvation He has shed to the last drop of His blood?

CCL. THE CONSUMMATION OF THE SACRIFICE

Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated (John xix. 30).

Humbly ask Our Lord to learn from Him how to prepare for a happy death.

1ST POINT.—Consider with what satisfaction Our Lord could say to His heavenly Father those words:—It is consummated. Whatever Thy glory and the salvation of souls demanded of me I have accomplished, even to the smallest detail, notwithstanding all the sufferings and humiliations it has cost. Happy shall I be if at the end of my life I can bear a like testimony to my life; if I have been faithful to all the duties of

my vocation, if I have spent myself in the service of my Divine Master and for the salvation of souls, if I have accepted and sanctified the crosses God sent me.

2ND POINT.—Consider how truly Our Lord could address those words to us :—It is consummated. All I could do for you, I have done ; all I could sacrifice for you, I have sacrificed. Indeed what remains of His youth and health, what of the goods of this world, what of His honour and reputation ? As we see Him there dying upon His cross, He has sacrificed everything, His very friends, and even His blessed Mother for our sake. And after thus giving up all He had, He asks in return only one thing, our love. How ungrateful we would be to refuse Him our love, or to be reluctant in giving up everything His holy service may demand of us.

3RD POINT.—Consider with how much satisfaction Jesus could say those words to Himself :—It is consummated. All is finished : the life-long privations of poverty, the humiliations and tortures He had to endure, the sorrows and anxieties that tore His heart, all were now over and to be followed by an eternity of glory and happiness. If we follow in the footsteps of our Divine Master, we shall have to renounce ourselves, and to take up our cross ; but one day, and that soon, all will be over for us also, and the great reward will last forever.

CCLI. JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

And Jesus crying out with a loud voice, said : Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost (Luke xxiii. 46).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with the firm purpose of living entirely for God.

1ST POINT.—Consider with what confidence Jesus could commend His spirit into the hands of His Heavenly Father. His whole life had been one continual self-renouncement. Nothing had been too hard, too painful, too humiliating, when there was question of glorifying His Father by atoning for sin ; nothing too difficult, when the salvation of souls was at stake. We too shall some day have to give back to God the soul He has given us. He gave it to us that we might save it, adorn it with virtues, enrich it with heavenly treasures, and thus make it

worthy of eternal happiness. How consoled we shall be if we have done all this ; how sad and troubled if we have been unfaithful to our trust. Let us then profit by the abundant means at our disposal and thus avoid the bitter remorse that will be our share, if we have only sought ourselves and our own comforts.

2ND POINT.—Consider how God into whose hands I shall one day commit my soul is all powerful, all just, divinely munificent, yet divinely terrible. God is all-powerful : from His punishments there is no escape for those who have been faithless, for the proud and wicked. God is all just, meting out to everyone reward or punishment according to his deserts. God is divinely munificent in recompensing everything done for Him, each little sacrifice offered in His honour. But God is divinely terrible in His punishment of those who have forced Him to reject them eternally. Now that we can prepare ourselves, let us remember the God before whom we shall have to render an account ; and let this remembrance strengthen in our hearts the fear of sin. Let us also cultivate an abiding sorrow for sin, and resolve to serve God with great love and generosity.

CCCLII. A SOLDIER PIERCES THE HEART OF JESUS

Then the Jews (because it was the parascere), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that was a great sabbath day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken ; and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came : and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side : and immediately there came out blood and water (John xix. 31-34).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a firm purpose to live entirely for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider your Saviour hanging lifeless from the cross that you may have life eternal. Is it not but fair that you should live for Him alone ? Consider how He allowed to close in death that mouth out of which such beautiful and holy lessons had issued, in order to teach you never to offend God by your words ; how He allowed death to close those eyes,

so full of divine light, that you may keep yours shut to anything endangering the purity of your heart; how He allowed death to shut those ears always open to the pleading of the humble and repentant, that you may keep yours closed to things sinful or dangerous. In fine, death has left this most pure and innocent body bloodless and exhausted, that you may learn to mortify your body and its evil propensities, and consecrate all your strength to the service of God. How very little Jesus asks from you in comparison with what He has given you.

2ND POINT.—Consider the soldier piercing the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Lord permits this last outrage. This Heart that had loved us so much, that had been torn by such anguish for our sake, will be open now to us as a place of refuge in time of danger and temptation, as a source of consolation in our sorrows, of strength in our weakness, and an inexhaustible treasury of grace in all our needs. How good our Jesus is to us! How our hearts should overflow with gratitude and confidence, and how eagerly we should avail ourselves of such generosity!

CCLIII. JOSEPH AND NICODEMUS TAKE DOWN THE BODY OF JESUS

And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked the body of Jesus.—And Nicodemus also came (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. (Matt. xxvii. 57-58, John xix. 39-40).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a lively and practical gratitude for all He has done for you.

1ST POINT.—Consider Joseph and Nicodemus taking Our Lord down from the cross. They were both His disciples, though in secret, out of fear of the Jews. They have witnessed all His sufferings and His cruel death for their sake; love and gratitude now banish all fear. They bravely come forward now, unmindful of the consequences, heedless of the anger their action might provoke among the enemies of Jesus. They do all they can to make up for their past want of courage. With

deep respect they take down the body from the cross, and wash its bloodstained wounds; with bitter tears of repentance and compassion they remove the nails and the crown of thorns, and they spare no expense to give their Lord as decent a burial as possible. Perhaps you also in the past have imitated Joseph and Nicodemus in their want of courage; perhaps you also have shrunk from the difficulties and humiliations attendant on the following of Christ. Resolve then to imitate them henceforth by showing your Divine Master all the respect, love, and gratitude you are able, and thus spend yourself generously in His holy service.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary received in her arms the mangled body of her Divine Son. Try to understand a little the depth of her sorrow, when she contemplated each of those terrible wounds, which the malice of man had inflicted on Him, whom she loved so tenderly both as her Child and as her God. Thank her for having consented to such a sacrifice for your sake.

3RD POINT.—Contemplate with compassion the dead body of your Saviour. Remember how He had assumed that body out of love for you, that by suffering and dying for your sake, He might save you from eternal perdition; and you have helped to cover it with wounds. Remember that He had come on earth to raise you to the dignity of a child of God, and you have helped by your sins to load Him with outrages. Remember that He had come on earth to endow you with a heavenly life; and you by sin have helped to put Him to an ignominious death. He has been all love for you, and you have broken His Heart with sorrow. May the remembrance of all this excite in your heart a true repentance for all the sins you have committed, and an ardent desire to make the best possible amends for them by your love and generosity in His holy service.

CCLIV. JESUS IS PLACED IN THE SEPULCHRE

And Joseph taking the body wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth: and laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument and went his way.. And the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate; saying: Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day:

lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away and say to the people : He is risen from the dead. And the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them : You have a guard. Go, guard it as you know. And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards (Matt. xxvii. 59-66).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of living only for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Mary, with grateful heart, watched the careful way in which Joseph and Nicodemus treated the Sacred Body of Jesus ; how she blessed them herself, and called down God's blessings upon them. Think how we also can do nothing more pleasing to our holy Mother than endeavour by our fervour, love and reverence, to repay Jesus for the ingratitude of men towards Him. It is a sure means to win her love and to draw down upon ourselves her maternal blessing.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Joseph and Nicodemus do not consider any expense or trouble too great to honour Him who has done so much for them. They buy a new linen shroud ; they put the Sacred Body in a new sepulchre, after having embalmed it with abundant and precious spices ; and before leaving it they roll a heavy stone to the opening of the tomb as a protection against thieves and wild animals. Of course it was only proper that they should do all this ; for is not Jesus worthy of all honour and reverence ? Let this be an example for us of how we ought to receive Our Lord into our heart. How clean that heart should be which welcomes Him who is all holiness ; how carefully it should be adorned with every virtue ; how strictly we should guard it that Jesus may not be taken away from it.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the sepulchre of Jesus is an image of the soul given to interior life. Whilst outside, amongst the enemies of Our Lord, all is trouble and agitation, and vain efforts to oppose the designs of the Almighty ; in the tomb of Jesus all is calm and peace, and expectation of the glorious resurrection. Human life has departed from the Sacred Body of the Saviour, but this remains united to the divinity, the source of all life. The same thing happens with those who truly die to the world to live only for God. Whilst around them, all is agitation and confusion they enjoy a peace such that the world cannot give. Perhaps they have to suffer, but they well know that tomorrow will be for them the day on which all sorrows shall be changed into joy. Is not such a happy disposition worthy of all our efforts to obtain it ?

PART IV

THE RESURRECTION. THE ASCENSION.

PENTECOST.

CCLV. THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION

And in the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and coming rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men (Matt. xxviii 1-4).

Humbly ask Our Lord for grace to rejoice at His happiness, and courage to be devoted in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the descent of the soul of Jesus into Limbo. Think of the immense happiness of the souls detained there on seeing their Redeemer whose coming they had so earnestly longed for. Some indeed had waited for hundreds of years for Him to come and open heaven to them. The very sight of Him so beautiful and so radiant with happiness changed their abode into paradise. Reflect how you will one day be granted the privilege of contemplating that divine countenance, according to the measure of your efforts to render yourself worthy of it. And while rejoicing in the happiness of your Divine Saviour, think of heaven and its joys that await the faithful.

2ND POINT.—Consider the admiration and thankfulness of those holy souls to whom it was permitted to see the Sacred Body of their Saviour all covered with wounds. How vividly they could realise what it had cost Him to procure for them the happiness of heaven. How fervently they must have thanked Him and how their hearts must have been aglow with love towards Him who had thus sacrificed Himself for them. Think how glad they must have been to see that Sacred Body restored

to life again, healed of all its wounds and sharing in the wonderful happiness of the soul. May these considerations enkindle similar feelings in your heart.

3RD POINT.—Represent to yourself Jesus rising from the tomb all shining with celestial brightness and glory. Remember that it is by the cross He attained to this glorious resurrection, and that we shall one day be glorified with Him, if we are willing to share His cross. Let this thought excite in your heart the generous determination of accepting from God's hands, not only with resignation but with thankfulness whatever share He gives you in the cross of your Saviour.

CCLVI. THE NEW LIFE OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR

Represent to yourself Our Lord coming forth from the tomb radiant with glory and happiness.

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant that, while you rejoice in His happiness, He may excite in your heart a generous spirit of self-sacrifice.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus, to glorify His Heavenly Father, had for thirty-three years lived a life of great poverty and privation. He wished to teach men detachment from the things of this world and self-renouncement. But now heaven is His home and all its riches are His, whilst thousands of angels serve Him with the deepest reverence and love. We too may be called to a life of poverty, and often have to do without the comforts money can procure ; nay, we may even at times feel the pinch of destitution. If we embrace this poverty out of love for Him who became poor for our sake, we too shall one day have a share in its reward. This thought has brought many to despise the wealth of the world. Let it at least detach our hearts from its perishable goods, that we may set them altogether on those heavenly treasures that perish not.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the life of Jesus on earth had been one of great suffering both in soul and body. Three days ago He was hanging on the cross all covered with blood and wounds. But now all this is past. His divine soul is overflowing with boundless happiness ; His sacred body is endowed with a new life exempt from pain and death. When we find it hard

to mortify our senses, when a cross of bodily or mental suffering weighs heavily upon our shoulders, let us look up to our Divine Model and Guide, and remember the saying of Holy Scripture that all the sufferings of this world are nothing in comparison with the eternal reward we can gain by them.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the life and death of Our Lord has been one long series of humiliations accepted willingly for the glory of His Heavenly Father. But now what a triumph, what glory is His! If we only kept in view how God loves and rewards humility, and what treasures He will give in return for every humiliation we accept for His sake, how eager we would be to acquire a virtue so richly rewarded, and to resemble our Divine Master. The saints rejoiced at being unknown to and reviled by men. Truly wise were they in taking Infinite Wisdom as their guide; while those whose ambitions centre on the praise of men, worldly greatness and glory can only be deemed foolish. Ask Our Lord to help you to understand and put in practice this great lesson.

CCLVII. THE GLORIFIED WOUNDS OF JESUS

Consider how Jesus after His resurrection kept in His body the wounds of His hands and His feet and the wounds in His side. They were no longer a source of pain but of glory and happiness and the tokens of His triumph.

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of being generous in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the remembrance of these glorified wounds of our Saviour ought to be for us a great lesson, and a source of consolation in the trials of this mortal life. Look at those wounds that made Jesus suffer so much; they are now resplendent with glory and an eternal cause of joy to Him. Do they not proclaim that, if in serving God faithfully we have something to suffer, those very trials lovingly endured for Him will become for us also so many sources of glory and happiness that will last forever?

2ND POINT.—Consider how the sight of those glorified wounds must fill the hearts of the Blessed in heaven with the deepest gratitude and love towards Jesus their Saviour. They

continually call to mind all He has suffered to procure for them the happiness they now enjoy. Some of them were great sinners ; from those wounds has issued the blood that washed away their sins. To all from those wounds flowed those innumerable graces that made them children of God and enabled them to gain that crown of eternal bliss, compared to which all the joys and riches and glory of this world are as nothing. Ought not these wounds even now to evoke the same feelings ? If now we are God's children, if now our souls are pure, if we can enrich them daily with heavenly treasures by our smallest actions, is it not to those sacred wounds that we owe it all ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus has kept the marks of His wounds that they may on the day of judgment bear witness against those that are condemned. Showing them to those unhappy souls He will say to them :—See how much I have loved you, and what love have you given me in return ? See how much I have borne to save and sanctify you, and you have thought every little trouble too much to bear. See what a price I have paid for the graces I have bestowed upon you, and you have so wantonly rejected them. See at how great a ransom I purchased your soul's redemption ; and you for some vile advantage or pleasure have rendered my generosity useless. How covered with shame and vain remorse shall poor sinners then be, seeing they shall be obliged to confess the justice of their condemnation.

COLVIII. JESUS APPEARS TO HIS HOLY MOTHER

Call to mind how Mary after the burial of Jesus retired with St. John to the house of some friend to await there the resurrection Jesus had foretold her. Represent to yourself the meeting of the Son and the Mother.

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to place entire confidence in Him in all your difficulties.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a beautiful example of confidence in God Mary has set us. Humanly speaking all seemed lost. Jesus was dead and buried ; His good name had been utterly destroyed ; His disciples were scattered in fear and discouragement. But Mary remains unshaken in her confidence. She

knows that God can turn all the evil doings of man to the good and the advantage of those whom He loves and who trust in Him. She knows that Jesus is the Son of God and that all He has foretold will be verified. And so, although her heart is bleeding at the remembrance of the passion of her Divine Son, she is neither troubled nor discouraged. How correctly Mary judged all these events, since, in fact, by the resurrection all the enemies of Jesus were confounded. Reflect how we too should act in the same way even in our worst difficulties. We may not understand how God can allow them ; we may not be able to see how all will end ; but let us nevertheless remain unshaken in our confidence in Him, and we may be sure that our confidence shall be rewarded.

2ND POINT.—Mary had all her life long been the Mother of sorrows. She had continually before her eyes the passion and cruel death of her Divine Son. She had suffered unspeakable anguish at the foot of the cross. But when Jesus appeared to her all her sorrows were at an end ; all were changed into immeasurable joy and happiness. The greater her share in the cross of Jesus, the greater also now her gladness at His resurrection. Think that one day it will be the same for you, if now, after Mary's example, you learn to accept lovingly the share Our Lord gives you in His sufferings. Represent to yourself as vividly as possible the joyful meeting of Jesus and His holy Mother. Look long at them and rejoice in the happiness that is now their reward for all they have suffered for your sake.

CCLIX. THE HOLY WOMEN GO TO THE SEPULCHRE

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought sweet spices that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen (Mark xvi. 1, 2).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you truly generous in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how these holy women set us a beautiful example of devotedness to Our Lord. When nearly all had

abandoned Him, they had remained faithful and had followed Him to Calvary ; and now that He is buried, they still wish to show Him all the honour and love they can. During the night they prepare the costly spices they have bought to anoint His Sacred Body, and before sunrise they are already on the way to the tomb. They feel that they can never do enough for Him who has sacrificed everything for their sake. Consider how true this is, and try to apply it in your own case. Think how well Our Lord deserves that you too should do all you can to honour Him and to show Him your love. If it costs you something to be obedient and humble, to mortify your senses and affections, to apply yourself to prayer, how gladly you ought to do it all for Him who sacrificed everything for you.

2ND POINT.—Consider how easily these holy women could have found a pretext for avoiding all that trouble and expense. They might have argued that Joseph and Nicodemus had already done all that was required and hence why should they interfere ; that it was in fact the duty of the Apostles, and not theirs. But no, they look upon their work as a work of love, and far from shirking it they deem it a favour to be allowed to do it. How is it then that we so readily seek and find excuses for not doing what we know would please God ? It is not necessary, we say ; we are not bound to do it under pain of sin ; or perhaps, others can do it, and if they do not why should we ? We speak in this way because we do not love Our Lord. “ Love knows no bounds,” says the Imitation, “ but burns with boundless fervour. Love feels no burden, counts no cost, longs to do even more than it is able.” If we truly loved, we would neither be asking ourselves how far we could go without sinning, nor would we be occupied with the doings of others, but would esteem ourselves happy to do all that we can for Jesus. All we can do is, in fact, but a small return of gratitude.

CCLX. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESURRECTION

And they said one to another : Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? And looking they saw the stone rolled back. For it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe : and they were astonished. Who saith to them :

Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen : he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him (Mark xvi. 3-6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a great confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the confidence these holy women place in God. They know that by themselves they are unable to roll away the stone that closes the sepulchre ; they are aware that the chief priests have sealed the tomb and put guards to prevent anybody from approaching it. But nothing keeps them back. The work they are undertaking is for God and they firmly trust that He will help them ; nor are they deceived in their confidence. They find the stone rolled away by an angel, the seals are broken and the guards have fled. If we wish to advance in the way of perfection and to work for God we too shall meet with difficulties ; our weakness and defects shall weigh us down as a stone which we alone can never remove. The devil, aided by our passions, will do all he can to keep us away from Our Lord. But why should we be discouraged ? Is not the work of our sanctification a work undertaken for the glory of God ? Does He not desire it earnestly and is He not powerful enough to remove all obstacles to it ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of the Angel : “ Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified.” Those who love and seek Our Lord crucified, that is, those that are willing to take up His cross, the humble and mortified, have nothing to fear. They are the cherished friends of Jesus who knows so well how to take care of His loved ones. Let this thought excite in you a generous desire to practise humility and mortification so that you may enjoy the protection of God’s Providence till you finally reach the happiness of heaven. .

CCLXI. ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN RUN TO THE SEPULCHRE

And going back from the sepulchre, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest... And these words seemed to them as idle tales : and they did not believe them. Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple : and they came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together : and that other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre. And when

he stooped down he saw the linen cloths lying : but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre (Luke xxiv. 9, 11, John xx. 3-6).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of being fervent in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Peter and St. John as soon as they heard what had happened, immediately ran to examine the sepulchre. They did not allow the want of belief and apathy of the others to influence them, but their great love for Our Lord directed their steps at once to the sepulchre. In the same way it may happen amongst us that some, forgetting what God expects from them, become negligent in His service and slothful at their spiritual exercises and these may soon begin to seek only their ease and comfort, and lose their time in trifles. But we then, if we sincerely love Our Lord, without judging others, will not allow such examples to influence us, to keep us back on the road to perfection or to prevent our doing what we know Our Lord desires of us.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the two Apostles run to the sepulchre. It is their love that hurries them thither. The diligence, joy, and generosity with which we perform our duties are likewise the measure of our love towards our Divine Master ; whilst negligence, slothfulness and the shirking of all effort and labour are signs that the love of God is growing cold in our hearts. If we notice any of these last signs in ourselves, let us without delay make a generous effort to renew our fervour and thus escape from a state most dangerous for a priest, the state of tepidity.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. John came first to the sepulchre but waited till Peter had entered it. Three days before Peter had denied his Divine Master, while St. John was the beloved disciple of Jesus ; yet neither the fault committed by St. Peter, nor the predilection of Our Lord for himself causes St. John to forget that St. Peter is his superior, or prevents him from paying due honour to him whom Jesus appointed the Head of the Church. Reflect upon the great example St. John sets us, and examine whether you never fail to recognise in your superiors the authority with which God has invested them. If perchance you find them with defects or even less talented than yourself, behave as St. John did and your obedience and humble submission will become at once an act of love and reverence towards God.

OCLXII. JESUS APPEARS TO ST. PETER

The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon (Luke xiv. 34).

Humblly ask Our Lord to make Himself more intimately known to you and to increase your love towards Him.

1ST POINT.—When the two Apostles had examined the sepulchre and had seen nothing in it but the linen cloths in which the Saviour had been buried, they returned to their homes. And while St. Peter was wondering at all that had happened Jesus appeared to him. Let us learn from this what great pleasure we give Our Lord by thinking of Him. If with feelings of gratitude we called to mind more frequently what He has done and suffered for us, the love He bears us, the beautiful example He has set us, He would then make Himself better and better known to us. This knowledge drawing us ever nearer to Him would become for us a great means of sanctification. Besides, how truly ungrateful we are to fail to remember such a great Friend and Benefactor, One to whom we owe everything.

2ND POINT.—Although a short time before St. Peter had shamefully denied His Divine Master, he is the first of the Apostles to whom Jesus appears ; but he was sincerely repentant and had placed all his confidence in the infinite mercy of the Sacred Heart. How full of encouragement and consolation is this favour bestowed by Our Lord on His repentant Apostle for those who have offended God grievously ; since it shows us clearly that not only does He never reject a heart truly contrite and humble, but is even ready to endow it with peculiar favours.

3RD POINT.—Consider what must have been the feelings of St. Peter when he saw his Divine Master whom he had so grievously offended. Notice how Jesus not only refrains from the slightest reproach but treats him with the greatest affection. How deep must have been St. Peter's sorrow for having grieved so good a friend. How grateful he must have felt for so much mercy. And with what deep humility he must have fallen at the feet of Christ. May this remind you how gently Jesus has treated you when you too have offended Him ; how merciful, how kind, how generous He has been to you notwithstanding your ingratitude. Try now to excite in your heart the feelings of St. Peter.

CCLXIII. MARY MAGDALEN AT THE SEPULCHRE

The disciples (St. Peter and St. John) therefore departed again to their home. But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. And she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her : Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith to them : Because they have taken away my Lord ; and I know not where they have laid him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing : and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her : Woman, why weepest thou ? Whom seekest thou ? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him : Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him : and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her : Mary. She turning, saith to him : Rabboni (which is to say, Master). Jesus saith to her : Do not touch me : for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren and say to them : I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God (John xx. 10-17).

Humbly ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of applying yourself seriously to the attainment of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider the depth of the sorrow of Magdalen on not finding the body of Jesus in the sepulchre. The apparition of the angels to her causes neither astonishment nor fear nor consolation, so overwhelming is her sorrow. The whole world is nothing to her without Jesus ; and this is because she has learnt so well to know Him. Many were the benefits she had received from Him : He had delivered her from the devils that had possessed her soul ; she had witnessed the holiness of His life, the wisdom of His teachings, the wonderful mercy of His Heart ; and hence she knew what a treasure it was to possess Him, and could enjoy neither rest nor consolation till she found Him again. If we were only to realise better who Jesus is, and what He is to us, how ardently we too would desire to possess Him ; we could enjoy no peace without Him. It is because we do not know Him that we so easily lose Him by sin, and take so little trouble to keep ourselves united to Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Jesus is all the while close to Mary Magdalen although she does not recognise Him. He takes a pleasure in watching the loving movements of her heart, and in enkindling still more the fervour of her desires. Thus it is that Our Lord sometimes withdraws the sweetness of His

presence from souls that love Him, and leaves them a prey to interior desolation, although all the while He remains with them. All the while He is teaching them to value more highly His presence in their hearts and to desire it more ardently, till finally He manifests Himself again to them and fills them with joy and peace such as the world cannot give. If ever God tries you in this manner let these considerations prove for you a source of strength and consolation.

CCLXIV. JESUS MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO MARY MAGDALEN

The same Gospel narrative.

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know Him more intimately and be more closely united to Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the intense happiness Mary felt when she recognised Our Lord. The very gladness of heaven filled her heart, and in an instant all her grief had disappeared. Thus at times even here on earth does Our Lord flood with peace and joy the hearts that love Him, to console them in their trials, to draw them nearer to Him and to encourage them to carry their cross bravely. If I desire such favours I must like Magdalen be faithful to Our Lord even to Calvary ; that is, I must not become slothful or disheartened on account of the difficulties I may meet on the way ; I must go on bravely with humble but unshaken confidence in Him who has called me to His service.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary falling at the feet of Jesus expresses in that one word *Rabboni*, Master, all the feelings that overwhelm her : admiration, reverence, joy, thankfulness and love. Endeavour to stir up within your heart the same feelings towards your Risen Saviour.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus allows Mary Magdalen to enjoy the happiness of His presence for but a few moments. He then bids her go and communicate the news of His resurrection to His Apostles. Such precious moments have been granted to the saints only at intervals and for a short time. They bring them a joy not of this earth but of heaven, and serve to

help them to carry their cross bravely and thus to gain heaven where those joys will never cease. And if Jesus allows us also to taste at times in some measure the consolation of His holy presence, it is to help, to strengthen and encourage us in the generous fulfilment of our duties and in the self-sacrifice they demand of us.

CCLXV. JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES OF EMMANUS (*1st Meditation*).

And behold, two of them went, the same day, to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself also, drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held, that they should not know him. And he said to them : What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad ? And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said to him : Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days ? To whom he said : What things ? And they said : Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and princes delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he that should have redeemed Israel. And now besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea and certain women also of our company affrighted us who, before it was light were at the sepulchre, and not finding his body, came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who say that he is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulchre, and found it so as the women had said : but him they found not. Then he said to them : O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory ? (Luke xxiv. 13-26).

Humbly ask Our Lord to keep alive in your heart a great trust in God's providence.

1ST POINT.—Jesus approached those two disciples whilst they were thinking of and talking about Him, and by His questions He encouraged them to continue. From this we see how

pleased Our Lord is that we remember Him and all He has done for us, and make Him and His interests the subject of our conversation. Do we not like to think and speak of those that are dear to us ? And is it not a sign of our love when we frequently remember them ? How sad it is then that our Divine Lord, our greatest Friend and Benefactor, is so rarely in our thoughts and so seldom the subject of our conversations.

2ND POINT.—Consider what caused the sadness and trouble of the two disciples : it was the weakness of their faith and their want of confidence in God. They knew from the Holy Scriptures and from Jesus Christ Himself that He would be crucified and rise again the third day. They had heard the holy women testify that He was alive again. Had they only believed all this and put their trust in God's providence, how strengthened and consoled they would have been in this hour of trial. But they were troubled. Is it not a want of confidence in God that makes us lose our peace of heart ? We know that He is infinitely good, wise and powerful, and that He is our most loving Father ever watching over and directing us in all the events of our life. Hence, if in difficulty, we allow ourselves to be troubled and disheartened, do we not deserve to be rebuked by Our Lord in the same way as those two disciples ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how those two disciples humbly accept the remarks Jesus makes, recognising their fault and the justness of the rebuke it had evoked. Nay, they are grateful to Him, and far from turning away from Him they try to keep Him with them and to hear more, although He is only a stranger. How pleased Our Lord must have been with them and how He must have longed to make Himself known to them. If we always accepted the corrections of our superiors in this spirit, how readily Our Lord would forgive our faults, and how many blessings this humble disposition of heart would draw down upon us.

COLXVI. JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS (*2nd Meditation*).

Jesus said to them : Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory ? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures

the things that were concerning him. And they drew nigh to the town, whither they were going : and he made as though he would go farther. But they constrained him, saying : Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent. And he went in with them (Luke xxiv. 26-29).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a great esteem for the word of God, a great desire to understand it, and a firm purpose to put in practice the precepts it contains.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord imparts to His disciples a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. God desires to communicate through them to mankind the treasures of His wisdom. Certainly then we would displease Him if we neglected so great a gift, we priests especially, who are so much in need of divine wisdom to sanctify ourselves and lead others to heaven. Under the infallible guidance of the Church we should apply ourselves to acquire the knowledge and understanding of the word of God.

2ND POINT.—Consider those words : “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory ?” How thankful we ought to be to God who doubtless could have redeemed us without the sufferings of His Son. Yet in His infinite wisdom and goodness He determined on this mode of redemption, in order to imprint deeper on our hearts all the horror and wickedness of sin, to make us realise better the greatness of His love, and to set us a powerful example of those virtues we are so much in need of : humility, mortification, obedience, patience and resignation in carrying our daily cross. Let us resolve firmly to profit by this goodness of God.

3RD POINT.—Consider how earnestly the two disciples listen to the words of Jesus ; how eager they are to hear more ; how they press Him to remain with them ; and how much good they derive from Him. If we can but realise the priceless gift of God’s word, and how mighty a source of virtue and holiness it is for those who receive it with humble and docile heart, we too shall be most desirous of hearing and keeping it and humbly applying to ourselves the lessons it teaches. Thus too shall we come to a more intimate knowledge of Our Lord, and learn from Him the science of the saints.

COLXVII. JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS (*3rd Meditation*).

And it came to pass, whilst he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened : and they knew him. And he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to the other : Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way and opened to us the scriptures ? And rising up, the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 30-33).

Humbly ask Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a generous love towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord consecrates the bread and gives Holy Communion to His two disciples. He had Himself carefully prepared them for it. He had moved them to a humble repentance for their faults ; He had enkindled in their hearts a living faith and confidence and an ardent love towards Himself ; and thus He gives and makes Himself known to them. Such are the dispositions which Our Lord would like to find in you when you celebrate Holy Mass and receive Him into your heart. He Himself will produce them in you if, like the disciples of Emmaus, you earnestly desire them, pray for them, and open your heart to His teaching.

2ND POINT.—Consider the effects of the love of Our Lord on the hearts of those two disciples. It not only fills them with great joy but leads them to act. Although they were tired from their journey, although it was already night, they went back at once to Jerusalem, putting aside all other considerations, to acquaint the Apostles with what had happened that they too might glorify God. Think what a source of happiness it is to know Our Lord intimately. His knowledge will enkindle love for Him in your heart, and this love will become for you a source of peace, consolation and strength. Besides, loving Him, you will desire to see your Divine Master loved and glorified. This will animate you with a great zeal to work and spend yourself for His glory, and to make Him known to those who know Him not, and loved by those who love Him not or who love Him very little.

3RD POINT.—Consider how it was Holy Communion that opened the eyes of the disciples and caused that flame of love which Our Lord's discourse had enkindled on the way to burst

forth. We too ought to seek and find that love of God and zeal for souls which must animate us, in the devout celebration of Mass and fervent reception of Holy Communion. Resolve to use this powerful means as diligently as possible.

CCLXVIII. JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES ASSEMBLED (*1st Meditation*).

Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them : Peace be to you (John xx. 19).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make Himself better known to you that you may love Him better and confide in Him entirely.

1ST POINT.—Consider the Apostles. Their lack of confidence leads to complete discouragement, hence, while the holy women show so much activity in honouring their Divine Master, with the exception of St. Peter and St. John, none of the Apostles leave the house, and all are wholly occupied about the best means to secure themselves against the Jews. They sincerely love Our Lord, but their love is, as it were, paralysed. Behold the baneful effect of the want of confidence. They had received so many proofs of Our Lord's power, of His wisdom and His love for them; they had heard Him foretell His passion and resurrection, but now forgetful of all else, they are absorbed by the thought of their own safety. Let us be on our guard against all discouragement. Have we not all the promises of God to rely on? Those then that trust in Him shall not be confounded. Remember that Our Lord has said that those who seek first the kingdom of God shall have all the rest added unto them.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord appeared to His Apostles only very late. He had already manifested Himself to the holy women who had shown Him such generous love; He had appeared to Mary Magdalen who longed so much to possess Him, to St. Peter who had run to the sepulchre, to the disciples of Emmaus who at least had not ceased thinking and speaking of Him even in their trouble. Perhaps the want of fervour in the Apostles was due to discouragement. Their slowness to

believe and their being so much occupied with their own safety was perhaps the reason why Our Lord delayed in coming to them. Let us take care that the same faults do not retard Him from making Himself better known to us ; and let us see that such as have received much less from God than we priests have, do not get ahead of us in the knowledge and love of Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider the merciful condescension of Jesus towards His Apostles. What would have become of them if He had abandoned them in punishment for their lack of confidence in Him. Surely in after-times, the remembrance of their own weakness and of the kindness of their Divine Master must have been a powerful incentive to humility and to gratitude. How much less deserving are we of Our Lord's special favours on account of our past offences ; and still we also have been abundantly favoured instead of being punished as we deserved. May the remembrance of this be food for our humility and gratitude to God.

CCLXIX. JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES ASSEMBLED (*2nd Meditation*).

The same Gospel narrative.

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know Him better and to increase your love for Him and confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus to His Apostles : Peace be to you. He wants peace and joy to reign in the hearts of those that love Him. It is His first object after the resurrection to bring heavenly peace to those that were troubled in mind, by restoring their confidence. Jesus has the same desire to-day in our own case. Let us then remember how by the cross He has conquered the world, how, on the very day His enemies thought themselves victorious, His almighty hand overthrew all their plans and turned their malice against themselves. Is not He who has overcome death our Saviour and Protector ? Have His power, His wisdom and His love for us diminished that we should fail to trust in Him ? Let us cast aside all vain fear and anxiety. Though weak and powerless by ourselves let us remember that we can do all things in Him who strengthens us.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus to His Apostles : Fear not. Perhaps we too not recognising Jesus are afraid of Him when He comes to us. How is it that we are so easily upset by some slight humiliation ? Is it a failure we meet with, or some contradiction or opposition in our work ? Why do we feel disheartened in aridity or in time of temptation ? Is it not because we fail to recognise the protecting hand of Jesus in these trials or to detect His all-wise providence which directs everything for the good of those who trust in Him ? Let us with the Apostles listen to those words : Fear not ; it is I, your God, your best Friend is with you, fear nothing.

3RD POINT.—Consider why it is that Jesus desires so ardently that peace and confidence should reign in our hearts. It is because by it we truly honour His infinite perfections : His wisdom, His goodness, His power. Whilst on the other hand, our want of trust is a real offence to Him. It is also because where peace and confidence reigns, courage will not be wanting in labouring for our sanctification as well as for the salvation of others. The troubled and down-cast heart is unfit for generous efforts. No wonder the devil tries so hard to disturb and dishearten us. Are we going to allow ourselves to be deceived by him ?

CCLXX. JESUS PROVES THE TRUTH OF HIS RESURRECTION

But they being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them : Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts ? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Handle, and see : for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and feet. But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, he said : Have you here any thing to eat ? And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains, he gave to them. And he said to them : These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms, concerning me. Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures (Luke xxiv. 37-45).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a living faith and unswerving confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider the trouble Our Lord takes to prove to evidence His resurrection, and to banish any doubt that might still have existed in the minds of His Apostles. He does so because a living faith in Him was absolutely necessary if they were to do the work He expected from them. Although we may not be called upon to endure the trials the Apostles encountered and the difficulties that fell to their lot, such a faith is very necessary for us also, if we are to become fit instruments in the hands of God. For it is from this faith that we too must draw our consolation, our fervour, our constancy and our strength, as well as our protection against the snares of the devil, the world and the flesh. Let us try to understand how necessary it is to pray fervently for so great a gift, and with the help of God's grace to increase our confidence in Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider the wonderful condescension of Our Lord towards His Apostles. He had sent them the holy women, Mary Magdalen, St. Peter and the disciples of Emmaus, to announce His resurrection; they had seen Him themselves; He had allowed them to touch His hands and feet; and still, they did not believe. Surely they deserved to be left to themselves. But the mercy of Jesus knows no bounds. Think how merciful He has had to be towards you. Notwithstanding your coldness and want of generosity, He does not cease to urge you to give Him your whole heart without reserve. How long will you refuse it Him?

3RD POINT.—Consider how the hearts of the Apostles were flooded with joy once they had expelled all doubt and hesitation. The same thing always happens with those who give themselves entirely to God. If hitherto I have not experienced the gladness of the presence of Jesus in my heart, is it not perhaps because I do not give myself entirely to Him, because I keep something back from Him?

CCLXXI. THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES

He said therefore to them again : Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you (John xx. 21).

Humbly ask Our Lord the grace to realise the greatness of your vocation and the duties it implies.

1ST POINT.—Consider the greatness of the mission Jesus confides to His Apostles. It is identical with that for which He came into the world : to glorify God by saving souls. Of all God's works St. Denis considers this the greatest, namely, to withdraw men from sin, to restore to their souls their supernatural beauty, to teach them the way to heaven and to inflame their hearts with the love of God. We too, though unworthy, have been chosen by God for this same mission. What an honour for us to be thus associated with Our Lord Himself. Should we not consider ourselves bound to do all we can to fit ourselves for so high a vocation ? Let us then resolve to lead a holy life and to acquire the necessary science. How wrong it would be on our part, through sloth and negligence, to render ourselves incapable of fulfilling our duties properly.

2ND POINT.—Consider what those words, "As my Father hath sent me, I also send you," meant for the Apostles and for you also. The Heavenly Father had sent His Son into the world to save souls, not by leading a life of ease and comfort but by one of constant self-denial ; not by the acquisition of wealth and the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, but by entire detachment from the goods and pleasures of this earth. In the same manner did Our Lord send His Apostles, and so does He now send you. He wishes you not to take life easy, but to work generously ; not to seek your own satisfaction, but to deny yourself for the sake of duty ; not to acquire a great name among men, but to live a life of humble subjection and obedience. Have you till now understood your vocation thus ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how the Apostles left to themselves were quite incapable of fulfilling such a mission. But Jesus who sent them gave them a share of His own power, and promised that His assistance would never fail them. Reflect upon the tremendous powers conferred by God on every priest,—hence, what an obligation you are under to use them worthily. Remember that the divine help you are in need of will never fail you, if by a true spirit of prayer you keep yourself united to Him who is the source of all wisdom and strength.

COLXXII. THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

When he had said this, he breathed on them ; and he said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them : and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained (John xx. 22-23).

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to realise the immense power He has conferred upon you, and to excite in you a true desire to become a more and more worthy instrument of His mercy towards men.

1ST POINT.—Consider that to forgive sins is a power that belongs exclusively to God ; and it is this divine power He has conferred upon you in your ordination. He has truly made you His representative ; and it is in His place and in His name that you act in the tribunal of penance ; it is His own precious Blood that you apply to souls to heal them and to raise them to life. How much purity of heart, how much wisdom and prudence, how much patience and mercy you are in need of to represent worthily your Divine Lord. How fervent and constant should be your prayer to obtain those virtues.

2ND POINT.—Consider the wonderful mercy of Jesus in the institution of this sacrament. Already by baptism He had given men the grace of becoming His children ; by the Holy Eucharist He had given them His own flesh and blood to be the heavenly food that would increase and strengthen in them the life of grace. If after such benefits and all He had done and suffered for them, men still proved ungrateful enough to offend Him, surely He had reasons enough to reject them. But behold, His infinite mercy reluctant to punish devises a means of restoring to His friendship souls that would fail to recognise that mercy. By this means not only are their offences pardoned, but the merits they had lost are restored and a new help is bestowed to enable them to serve Him better. How admirable is God's mercy. How happy should I deem myself to have been chosen as a minister of that infinite mercy. How gladly should I fulfil my duty towards those poor sinners whose salvation Our Lord has so much at heart.

CCLXXIII. JESUS MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO ST. THOMAS

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him : We have seen the Lord. But he said to them : Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said : Peace be to you. Then he saith to Thomas : Put in thy finger hither and see my hands. And bring hither thy hand and put it into my side. And be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said to him : My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed (John xxi. 24-29).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a dread of pride and a desire to practise humility.

1ST POINT.—Consider in how many and what grievous faults want of humility caused Thomas to fall, and to what danger it exposed him. It made him most unreasonably obstinate in his unbelief. Notwithstanding the unimpeachable evidence of all those who had seen Jesus, touched Him, conversed and eaten with Him, Thomas refused to believe. It made him entirely forget the respect He owed His Divine Master, and rendered him presumptuous to such a degree as to lay down conditions to Our Lord Himself. What would have been his fate if Jesus had not been infinitely merciful ? Instead of becoming the great saint he is, he would have been lost forever. Behold the manifold evils of pride. How many a priest who has allowed this vice to take root in his heart, has become obstinate in his own judgments, rebellious towards his superiors, unwilling even to give up heretical opinions, and ended his life without a desire of recovering God's friendship. Let us keep all pride at a distance.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Thomas generously repaired his fault. He thoroughly humbled Himself before Jesus and the Apostles, and prostrate at the feet of Our Lord made a full profession of faith while putting Himself at the mercy of His Divine Master. Admire the goodness of Jesus to the repentant

sinner, the gentleness of the reproof, and the fulness of His pardon, admitting Thomas as His Apostle just as before. Let us learn from this example that the next best thing after avoiding all faults, is to acknowledge and repent sincerely of any fault committed, and to place a boundless confidence in the infinite mercy of Jesus.

CCLXXIV. JESUS APPEARS ON THE SHORE OF LAKE TIBERIAS

Seven of the disciples being together, Simon Peter saith to them : I go a fishing. They say to him : We also come with thee. And they went forth and entered into the ship : and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore : yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them : Children, have you any meat ? They answered him : No. He saith to them : Cast the net on the right side of the ship ; and you shall find. They cast therefore : and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter : It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them : Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them : Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat, durst ask him : Who art thou ? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them : and fish in like manner (John xxi. 3-13).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to know Him better that you may love Him more.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Apostles had worked the whole night long without catching anything ; and then at a single command of Jesus they catch a multitude of fish. Does not Our Lord allow us also at times either to struggle against our own defects or to work at the conversion of others for long

years without any apparent result? He wishes to make us realise how weak and powerless we are by ourselves, in order to strengthen us in humility. But all the while He watches our efforts, till at last He interferes and brings about even better results than we could have hoped for. In this way He shows us clearly that all good must come from Him, and that it is from Him we must expect success in our endeavours. Let us never forget this necessary lesson.

2ND POINT.—Consider the ardent desire of St. Peter to be with his Divine Master. It prevents him from waiting till the ship can land, although it be close to the shore. His great love has taught him what a blessing it is to be near Jesus and he does not wish to lose a moment of His precious presence. If we understood better what a source of blessings it is to be united with Jesus, the fountain-head of all holiness and wisdom, of all strength and consolation, how eagerly we would strive to obtain this union by purity of heart and a true spirit of prayer.

3RD POINT.—Consider how very mindful Jesus is of the needs of the Apostles. He prepares a meal for them and serves them with His own hands, thus setting us a beautiful example of charity and humility, which we should strive to imitate in our dealings with our brethren, and especially with the poor.

CCLXXV. JESUS CONFIDES HIS FLOCK TO ST. PETER

When therefore they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these ? He saith to him : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He saith to him again : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me ? He saith to him : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He said to him the third time : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time : Lovest thou me ? And he said to him : Lord, thou knowest all things : thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him : Feed my sheep (John xxi. 15-17).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inflame your heart with love for Him,

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Peter had denied his Divine Master three times, and how Jesus now demands a triple public profession of love. He had not even once reproached Peter for his faithlessness, and now the only reparation that He asks of him is his love. O wonderful mercy of Our Lord ! Ought it not to fill me with confidence to learn that, if formerly I have offended so good a Master, I may still make up for my ingratitude by loving Him with my whole heart ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Peter has by his fall learnt to be humble. Formerly he thought himself stronger and more faithful than all the others. “ Although all shall be scandalized in thee,” he had said to Jesus, “ I will never be scandalized.” Now when Jesus asks him :—Do you love me more than these ? Peter remembering his former presumption and its subsequent terrible lesson, replies :—Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. How fittingly we too might draw a powerful lesson of humility from our past offences.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord before committing His flock to St. Peter demands of him a profession of love. By this Our Lord wants to teach us that if we are to be His worthy ministers the first thing we must do is to love Him. In Him alone can we love sinners, the poor, the little ones, the ignorant. His love alone can make us patient, merciful, devoted, in a word, what we ought to be to them. And if we fall short of this standard, it is because our love for Jesus is insufficient. It is in love for Him that we shall find the ardent zeal for souls that Our Lord expects from us ; for how could I truly love Him without loving the souls for which He has shed His blood ?

CCLXXVI. JESUS APPEARS ON A MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE

And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And seeing him they adored : but some doubted. And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying : All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matt. xxviii. 16-20).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you know Him better and love Him more ardently.

1ST POINT.—Consider the eagerness of the Apostles to see Jesus, to converse with Him, to be blessed by Him. In order not to miss an opportunity of doing so, they gladly undertake the journey to Galilee, where they know they shall meet Him. Reflect how this same happiness, so much coveted by the Apostles, is given to us also. Although we do not see Jesus with the eyes of the body, yet our faith assures us that He is really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. There we can daily visit Him, speak to Him, receive His help and advice, and obtain all we are in need of. What an honour, what a source of graces this divine Presence is to a priest who knows how to avail himself of it. How powerful a help it is for his own sanctification and for the success of the work confided to his care.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Jesus: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Is there any earthly king, however great, whose power approaches this? Yet it is this great Lord, before whom I am nothing, who wishes to be my friend, my confidant, my help and protector. What endeavours I should make to render myself worthy of such a favour, and to remove all obstacles by my diligence and care. Shall I not do all I can to make this friendship ever more intimate by my fervour and generosity in God's service?

3RD POINT.—Consider the words: "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." It is just as if Our Lord had said: I know that the task imposed upon you is not an easy one; but fear not, I am with you. We may apply these words to ourselves; for in order to answer to our vocation we have to work steadily at our own sanctification, to correct our defects, and to acquire those virtues that make a holy priest. We have also to work at the salvation and sanctification of others, that is, to withdraw them from sin and to lead them on to the practice of virtue. Left to ourselves, how could we ever perform such a task? But Our Lord is, and shall remain with us, provided only we ourselves do not abandon or reject Him. If He is with us, what is there to fear? Why be disheartened?

CCLXXVII. JESUS APPEARS IN JERUSALEM

At length he appeared to the eleven as they were at table : and he upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again. And he said to them : Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark xvi. 14-15).

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a living faith and confidence in His infinite goodness and power.

1ST POINT.—Consider how much Our Lord insisted on His Apostles having a living faith in His resurrection. It is because this faith is the foundation of Christianity. For the Apostles in particular, it was to be their life-long incentive to work for souls, the source of strength and consolation in the midst of their trials. For us too this faith is very necessary if we are to work heart and soul for the spread of God's kingdom. How ardently then we should pray for it.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord upbraids His Apostles for being so slow to believe. Have we not also frequently merited the reproaches of our Divine Master? Doubtless, we firmly believe and hold whatever God has revealed, and the Church teaches; and yet although perfectly conscious of the principles of faith, how often in practice does it seem dormant in us. For example, we firmly believe Our Lord to be the best, wisest and most trustworthy of all friends; and yet do we behave towards Him in accordance with our belief, that is, do we place all our trust in Him? Do we go to Him in all our needs? Do we like to speak to Him, to receive Him into our hearts? Are we doing all we can to keep up and promote such a valuable friendship? Again we believe the things of this world to be nothing in comparison with the treasures we can gather for heaven; and yet perhaps we find it very hard to give up some little satisfaction in order to acquire those treasures. Is our faith then really a living faith?

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord consoles His Apostles. Although they will see Him no more He will always be with them, watching over, protecting and helping them. This promise of Our Lord's extends to all those who like the Apostles would work in the vineyard of the Lord, and hence to ourselves. Let us then keep this consoling thought in mind in all the difficulties and tribulations we may meet in our labours.

COLXXVIII. HOW WE OUGHT TO RISE WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth (Coloss. iii. 1-2).

Humbly ask Our Lord to detach your heart more and more from the things of this world, and to inflame you with a fervent desire for heavenly things.

1ST POINT.—Consider that by sanctifying grace we have received from God a new life ; a life that has raised us far above our nature, a life by which we become, as St. Peter tells us, participators of the divine nature in a most admirable manner. Our earthly life is surely a great gift of God, but what must we say of a favour like this, which exalts us far above our highest natural aspirations and hopes ? If a king of this world raised one of his servants to the rank of his son and heir, it would be considered by all as something wonderful ; and yet this would be but a poor representation of what God has done for us. How highly then we ought to esteem this supernatural life ; how careful and determined we should be not to lose it ; how diligent we should be, with God's help, to increase it by all the means at our disposal. Should we not make it a point of honour to live up to so high a dignity ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of St. Paul : “ If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.” Would a poor man adopted by a king as his son, still hanker after the things he valued in his former condition ? Would he who has become rich, stoop down to pick up a few coppers ? Would he still be anxious to acquire the little things he considered as comforts before ? Would not all his ambitions be higher and more suited to the lofty dignity to which he has been raised ? So much more then should I verify all this in myself in proportion as my rank as God's child is higher. All my thoughts, desires, words and actions should be in keeping with the lofty position to which God's goodness has exalted me.

3RD POINT.—Consider the things of the world in comparison with those of heaven. They are so uncertain, so fleeting, so perishable and therefore of so little value ; whereas the things

of heaven are so great, that the greatest earthly advantages, be they riches or honours or pleasures, dwindle into nothingness in their presence. The saints understood this, and therefore not only did they not mind the things of the world, but even despised them. "I count all things as dung," says St. Paul, "that I may gain Christ."

CCLXXIX. THE RESURRECTION, MODEL OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Represent to yourself the Risen Christ appearing to the Apostles, full of a new and glorious life.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to begin to lead a more truly spiritual life.

1ST POINT.—Consider how necessary it is that Our Lord should live in you. As His priest you are His representative with men; you have to speak and act as such; but how can you worthily do so unless He lives in you, that is, unless His spirit be yours and unless you reflect, in your ideas, His ideas, in your desires and affections His desires and affections, in your works His works? Besides can there be anything greater, nobler, more advantageous to yourself than the fulfilment of such an ideal? Keep this in mind and strain every nerve to live only for God and God alone.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the life of the Risen Saviour should be your model, firstly in as much as His resurrection is a perfect one. He has allowed nothing of death or the tomb to cloud its glory. If then Our Lord live in me, and if I have risen with Him nothing should remain in me that savours of sin, the death of the soul. I should rid myself of all self-love, sensuality and pride, of all attachment to the things of this world; for it is only in this way that I can fully live in Him, a blessing than which nothing can be greater or more glorious. If so far I have not reached this most enviable degree of perfection, I must do all I can to attain it by applying myself generously to detachment from the world and to entire self-amendment.

COLXXX. THE RISEN SAVIOUR OUR MODEL

(1st Meditation).

Represent to yourself the Risen Christ appearing to the Apostles, full of a new and glorious life.

Humbly ask Our Lord to help you to strive to lead a truly spiritual life.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of the Apostles to the disciples of Emmaus when they returned to announce the resurrection of Jesus :—*Surrexit Dominus vere* : The Lord is truly risen. The resurrection was no mere appearance ; Jesus was truly alive. In this again Jesus is our model. Our spiritual life would be of little value if it consisted in mere appearances. It must not be enough for me, if people around should think me virtuous, and I am not so indeed. God sees my heart : He knows my most secret thoughts and desires ; His all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses of my conscience. Men may esteem and praise me and think all good of me, but what shall all this avail me if my intentions and actions are not worthy of the esteem of God ? It is from Him that I have to expect those heavenly blessings which alone can make my work bear fruit. It is by Him too that I shall one day be judged and rewarded for all eternity. Let me seriously examine whether my spiritual life be really genuine or not, and if I find myself wanting let me resolve to make strenuous endeavours to rectify what is wrong.

2ND POINT.—Reflect on the words of St. Paul :—Christ risen from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall have no dominion over Him. Through the grace of God we have risen from the death of sin, yet we may still relapse into it. Let us by imitating Our Lord strengthen our spiritual life so that in fact we do not lose it again. The grace of perseverance is gratuitous ; and it is by fervent and assiduous prayer that we must obtain it from God, and by adding to prayer a careful watchfulness over our hearts and senses, and the mortification of all our inordinate affections. Am I convinced of the importance of this ? Do I bear in mind the grave warning of Our Lord : “ Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation ” ?

COLXXXI. THE RISEN JESUS, OUR MODEL

(2nd Meditation).

Represent to yourself the Risen Lord appearing to the Apostles, full of a new and glorious life.

Humbly ask Our Lord in this meditation to give you a great desire of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Risen Christ emerged from the sepulchre which was shut with a heavy stone, and entered the room where the Apostles were gathered, although they had carefully locked the doors for fear of the Jews. The glorified body of the Saviour passed through every obstacle; nothing could hold it back. The more you love Our Lord and the more you live His life, the greater share shall your soul have in a like glorious privilege. Holy Scripture tells us that for those who love God everything, far from proving an obstacle to their advancement, becomes a new means of salvation. How is it then that I am so easily stopped on the way to perfection by external circumstances? Why do these become to me an occasion perhaps of sin? It is because I do not yet love God enough; it is because Our Lord does not yet live perfectly in me.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this result was realised by the saints, and how nothing could keep them back from their spiritual advancement. If they suffered, they took advantage of their sufferings to wipe out their past offences and glorify God's providence by accepting them humbly and bravely from His hand and bearing them patiently and cheerfully. If they were tempted, they drew profit from their temptations by making of them occasions to give their Lord new proofs of love by their fidelity and courage in overcoming them. If ill, they were patient and resigned; if in good health, they worked hard. If poor, they were pleased to resemble their Divine Master; if rich, they used their wealth in doing good. In failure they humbled themselves and trusted in God; in success they gave Him all the glory. Thus every event or circumstance brought them nearer to God, and contributed to sanctify them. If we have not learnt yet to live like the saints, let us strive generously to live more perfectly and fervently pray for the grace to do so.

COLXXXII. THE RISEN JESUS, OUR MODEL
(3rd Meditation).

Represent to yourself the Risen Lord appearing to the Apostles, full of a new and glorious life.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a great and practical desire of perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider the wonderful agility of the sacred Body of our Saviour. At one moment He appears in one place and at the next He is far off. Think how in this He is the model of the activity which ought to encourage us to advance on the way of perfection. "Some birds," says St. Francis of Sales, "cannot fly at all, and remain always on the ground ; some others fly little and with difficulty ; others soar high into the air and cover great distances with wonderful swiftness." Lisewise on the road to perfection, some cannot raise themselves above the perishable things of this earth ; their heart is attached to them, and this brings about that they remain for years and years with the same uncorrected defects. Others detach themselves somewhat from their self-love and the love of the world, but not thoroughly ; now and again they make some efforts, but hampered as they are by many inordinate affections, they advance but slowly. A third class breaks off entirely and generously with whatever could keep them back. All they desire is to love God and to be loved by Him. Such are truly animated with the life of their Divine Lord. How happy, how glorious is such a life. Let us try hard to lead one of the same sort.

2ND POINT.—Consider what it is that has kept you back till now. Perhaps some remnants of pride that urge you to seek your own rather than God's glory ; perhaps some sensuality that inclines you to put your own ease and comfort above what you know to be your duty, what you know to be pleasing to God ; perhaps discouragement and want of trust in God which causes your heart to shrink from generous efforts in God's service. Whatever be the cause that up till now has retarded you, resolve firmly with God's help to lay it aside that you too may advance swiftly in the path of perfection.

CCLXXXIII. OUR LORD'S INTERCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the Kingdom of God (Acts i. 3).

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with the generous determination of acquiring a true spirit of prayer.

1ST POINT.—Consider the intention of Our Lord in these apparitions to His Apostles. He knew how troubled they had been by His death and passion, and how much courage they would need in their future work and trials. And so, in His great love for them, He comes to bring peace and comfort by His holy conversation. Can we admire, as it deserves, the loving condescension of the Divine Master towards His poor and weak children? What He did of old for His Apostles He still wishes to do for us. To us also He manifests Himself in prayer, that wonderful intercourse between God and His creatures. Do we appreciate this divine favour and strive to profit by it?

2ND POINT.—Consider the many advantages that accrued to the Apostles from that frequent intercourse with Jesus. It enlightened them about God's wonderful dispensations for the redemption of the world, and about the greatness, goodness and power of Our Lord. It increased their love and devotion towards Him, filling their hearts with the determination of spending themselves in His service. It animated them with unbounded confidence in Him who had so gloriously conquered death itself. It brought to them the peace of the children of God, a peace that surpasses all sense and remains undisturbed in the midst of tribulations. Earnest intercourse with God in prayer will produce similar fruits in your hearts. In our work we are so much in need of light and consolation, courage to meet obstacles, strength to persevere; all this we shall find in prayer as the history of the saints bears witness. Shall we then be negligent and slothful in the use of so powerful a means, and thus lose the fruits which Our Lord meant it to bear in our case?

CCLXXXIV. JESUS ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE (1st Meditation).

Represent to yourself Our Lord reminding His Apostles of what He had said to them a little before His passion :—*But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you. And now I go to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me : Whither goest thou ? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth : it is expedient to you that I go...A little while, and now you shall not see me ; and again a little while, and you shall see me : because I go to the Father...You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy (John xvi. 5-7, 16, 20).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your courage that you may surmount all difficulties.

1ST POINT.—Consider the feelings of the Apostles when they heard these words from Our Lord. They had been so happy to possess Him again, to converse with Him, to relish the sweetness of His presence and to feel the security of His all-powerful protection ; and now they were to lose Him again ! So also does Our Lord treat His chosen ones for the good of their souls. He allows them to experience the sweetness of His presence and the security of His powerful protection, in order to draw their hearts to Himself : and then He withdraws from them the joy of His sensible presence and protection, and plunged in darkness and aridity they feel the whole weight of their own weakness. If similar trials befall us, let us remember that it is for our good that God treats us thus, and that all the while He ceases not to love and protect us.

2ND POINT.—Consider these words : “ A little while and you shall not see me ; and again a little while and you shall see me again. You shall be made sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy and your joy no man shall take from you.” Think how all our trials, temptations, aridities and struggles against our passions shall last only a little while, a short time that will soon pass. If during that time we have been faithful to duty, these trials shall be changed into joy, a joy and happiness so great that we cannot even conceive it, a joy that will never more be snatched away from us, for we shall dwell with Our Lord forever. Realise this truth and let it penetrate your heart, so that you may draw courage from it to do your best bravely to the end.

CCLXXXV. JESUS ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE

(2nd Meditation).

Represent to yourself Our Lord saying to His Apostles :—
It is expedient to you that I go (John xvi. 7).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your courage and confidence in times of spiritual desolation and aridity.

1ST POINT.—Consider in what sense it was useful for the Apostles that Jesus should withdraw from them His sensible presence, when this very presence was their light, their strength and their consolation. They had too strong an attachment to the pleasure afforded by their Divine Master's presence, and Jesus wanted them to be detached even from this, so that no shadow of self-love might dim the ardour of their love for God. Jesus also wanted them to learn to love God for His own sake alone, and not because of the consolations they were enjoying in His service. We also are much inclined to seek ourselves even in our best actions, and to grow attached to the consolation we experience in well-doing, rather than to the fulfilment alone of God's holy will. We are very prone to think much of ourselves and even to put ourselves above others in the little we do for God. And hence, it is useful for those on whom God intends to confer many graces, that they should learn by trial not to seek their own satisfaction, but purely the accomplishment of God's will. It is salutary for them to feel a sense of their own weakness and nothingness, so that they may come to recognise that all good proceeds from God. Thus will their virtue become more solid and their actions more meritorious for heaven. Ask Our Lord to make you understand this practically, and place yourself entirely in His loving hands to be purified and sanctified according to His good pleasure.

2ND POINT.—Consider what conclusions you ought to draw from all this. Firstly, that God, at the very moment He allows those trials to befall you, is making you the object of His special care and providence, since He is teaching you the practice of humility and self-denial. Thus He purifies your love towards Him and gives you a good opportunity of acquiring a more beautiful crown in heaven. Secondly, that you must not be discouraged or think yourself abandoned at such times ; but rather humble yourself more and more in God's sight and throw yourself confidently into His arms. Thirdly, that far from allowing discouragement to weaken your zeal in God's service, you should continue faithfully to do your best, leaving the rest to God's mercy.

COLXXXVI. JESUS GOES TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as Bethania, to the mount of Olives (Luke xxiv. 49-50).

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a lively desire for His love and heavenly grace.

1ST POINT.—Consider why Our Lord orders His Apostles to stay together in Jerusalem. He had promised to send them the Holy Ghost who would further enlighten and strengthen them, and He wished that they should prepare themselves in recollection and prayer for the reception of so exalted a grace. More estimable than all natural gifts are the graces God wishes to bestow upon you, both to sanctify your own soul, and to fit you to be an instrument in His hands for the salvation and sanctification of others; and hence He wishes you also to prepare your heart for their reception. Thoughtless people, who are never recollected, and who shrink from serious meditation and earnest prayer, look out only for dissipation and vain and useless distractions. They thus hinder the action of God's grace and become unfit for the reception of special light from on high. Reflect how many graces you need to live up to your vocation, and resolve to obtain them by preparing yourself diligently in God's sight.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord led His Apostles to Bethania, the dwelling place of Lazarus and his sisters. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus wishes to give these good and faithful friends, who had always exhibited such reverence and love towards Him, a last token of His gratitude for all they had done. In the same manner does Jesus like to repay abundantly every little thing we do for Him. He remembers lovingly every thought directed towards Him, every holy desire offered Him, every word spoken in His honour, every action performed for His sake, every little sacrifice borne out of love for Him, and every suffering endured in His service. He forgets nothing, and all that we do for Him, be it ever so little, gives us a new title to His love and favour. How is it that we do not exert ourselves to the utmost for so good a Master, that we are so slothful in serving One so ready to reward? How is it that instead of working for Him we labour for the world, that repays so poorly those who spend themselves in its service?

CCLXXXVII. THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

(1st Meditation).

And he led them out as far as Bethania : and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 50-51).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your generosity in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord ascended to heaven from the very spot where He had begun His passion, so as to remind us once more that the way to heaven is the way of the cross, the way of duty bravely performed in spite of hardships and trials. Can there be any way better and more secure than the one Jesus, the God of infinite wisdom, has taken so much pains to point out to us? Do not those deceive themselves who choose another way? Let us, keeping in view the reward, follow bravely in the footsteps of the Divine Master.

2ND POINT.—Consider Our Lord in the midst of His faithful disciples. How His heart burns with love towards them. They are the beginning of that great Church which is to carry on the work of salvation till the end of the world. With what tender affection Jesus blesses them and prays that they may be sanctified and become worthy instruments of His mercy towards men. Reflect how Our Lord looks down in the same way upon us, the little band of His chosen ones, who have been called to do His work in this country. How He longs to see us sanctifying ourselves, and how impatient He is to bless our efforts at becoming worthy instruments for the salvation of souls. We, on our part, ought to meet His wishes and remove all obstacles to the graces He is anxious to give us.

3RD POINT.—Consider Our Lord ascending to heaven radiant with joy and glory. All His labours and sufferings are over. Bethlehem with its abject poverty, Nazareth with its hidden life of toil, Judea and Galilee with the scenes of His hard labour for souls, Calvary with its outrages and torments are now only sweet memories of all He has done for His heavenly Father. All trials are past, and the boundless happiness of eternity has begun.

CCLXXXVIII. THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
(2nd Meditation).

And when he had said these things, while they looked on, he was raised up: and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were beholding him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven (Acts i. 9-11).

- Humbly ask Our Lord to excite you to great fervour in His service.

1ST POINT.—Place before your eyes the glory and happiness of Jesus as He ascends into heaven, and consider the path by which He reached it. The Holy Ghost tells us this in the Scriptures: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause, God also hath exalted him" (Phil. ii. 8-9). Thus He points out the way to attain to a share in His happiness and glory, a share that shall be the greater in proportion as I follow Him more closely. And I must follow Him, first by humility: recognising my own nothingness before the infinite Majesty of God; being willing to be little and to be treated as such; counting as worthless my own temporal interests, when by sacrificing them I can glorify my Creator. Secondly, by obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. To do the will of His heavenly Father, nay to gratify His smallest wish, Our Lord, as man, thought no sacrifice too great or too painful. God knowing our weakness does not ask from us such sacrifices as He demanded of His Divine Son. Still, if we truly want to serve Him faithfully, and win the glorious crown of the saints, we shall have to live a life of self-sacrifice, we shall have to give up our own desires, our own views, our own comfort and pleasures. Reflect how proper and how advantageous for ourselves it is that we should do so.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Apostles looking up to Jesus ascending into heaven follow Him not more with their eyes than with the desires of their hearts. How they longed to go with Him and to share His happiness. But the angels coming warned them that it was not then the time for vain desires but for action. They had to perform the sacred mission Our Lord

had confided to them, to detach their hearts from the things of the world, to sanctify and spend themselves for the salvation of souls. After that Our Lord would come and take them to Himself, giving them a share in His heavenly kingdom. So it is with us. Of course we desire a beautiful place in heaven and the crown of the saints, but vain desires will not suffice. We must work for it, we must devote ourselves heart and soul to the mission Our Lord has given us; and then we too shall one day with incomparable joy see Him coming to take us to Himself and to make us happy for ever.

CCLXXXIX. THE HOLY SOULS ASCEND TO HEAVEN WITH OUR LORD

Represent to yourself Our Lord ascending to heaven surrounded by multitudes of jubilant souls to whom He was to open heaven, according to the Scriptures:—*Ascending on high, he led captivity captive (Eph. iv. 8).*

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a great generosity in His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider how ardently those holy souls had longed to enter into eternal happiness. Many had served God to the best of their power, but still the sin of our first parents had kept heaven closed to them. Now that it is open to all, how bitter shall be the regrets of those who shall be detained from entering it by their negligence in God's service and by those innumerable venial sins so thoughtlessly committed and so insufficiently atoned for. Surely this thought must be for us a powerful warning against committing deliberate venial faults; and let it also induce us to use with diligence and perseverance all the means God puts at our disposal to clear the debts we have contracted with Him by the sins of our past life.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the holy souls in the midst of their joy did not forget at what cost Jesus had delivered them from captivity. How their hearts overflowed with gratitude towards Him. how fervently they thanked and praised Him. Now heaven is open for us in spite of the sins we may have committed in the past. When we had deserved only hell, forgiveness has been so easily granted, God's justice so easily

satisfied. Our debts have been wiped out and we can daily gain new merits for heaven. Do we ever think of the great price which Our Lord paid to secure all this for us? Perhaps not, and hence we are so ungrateful for the immense benefit of redemption.

3RD POINT.—Whilst considering the gratitude of those holy souls towards their Redeemer, reflect on the triumph of a good priest. By his labours, his sufferings and prayers, He has with God's help withdrawn many souls from their evil ways and brought them to heaven; by his holy life and teaching He has been an instrument in God's hands to enkindle the love of God in others and thus lead them to eternal happiness. He too will one day rejoice in their gratitude, and find his own eternal bliss a hundredfold increased by theirs. Should not such a thought be a continual encouragement to arouse our zeal?

CCXC. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS INTO HEAVEN

Represent to yourself Jesus entering into heaven and offering to His Heavenly Father the fruits of His labours and passion.

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your fervour and generosity in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider Jesus presenting to His Heavenly Father the beautiful and sublime fruits of His life and passion: sin atoned for and God's infinite justice requited; mankind restored to the friendship of their Creator; heaven opened to so many millions who will for ever glorify God. Henceforth thousands of saints will reflect in a most wonderful manner the divine perfections in the virtues with which their souls will be adorned. In recompense, God the Father places Jesus, as man, on His right hand by which is signified that He raises Him in happiness and glory above all creatures. Reflect on the happiness we shall one day experience if, following in the footsteps of Jesus, we can present ourselves to our heavenly Father laden with the fruits of abundant merits; if each of us can likewise say; "I have fulfilled the work thou hast given me." To attain this end we must now make the good pleasure of God the rule of all our actions.

2ND POINT. Consider how Our Lord as man was constituted by His heavenly Father the King of heaven and earth,—not merely the Ruler of the world, but the Judge of all mankind. Now Jesus is full of mercy : the treasures of His satisfaction and merits are laid open to us, that by them we may obtain not only complete forgiveness, but also all the means of sanctifying ourselves and gaining souls for Him. Great indeed is the power entrusted to us for the salvation of others. What then would be our feelings when we have to appear before our Judge, should we have failed to make diligent use of His mercy and the many graces He bestowed on us, or should those souls whose salvation depended on us have been lost through our lack of zeal ?

CCXCI. THE FRUITS OF THE ASCENSION

Imagine you behold Our Lord in heaven lovingly inviting you to follow in His footsteps that you may have a share in His happiness and glory hereafter.

Humbly pray Our Lord to excite in your heart a firm resolution of serving Him with great fervour and generosity.

1ST POINT. The first fruit of the Ascension is that heaven is now open to all. Before Our Lord ascended into heaven even the greatest saints as St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph could not enter there. Through the merits of our Redeemer, if we do what in us lies, we can now secure a speedy entrance into eternal happiness even though our past offences have been grievous and frequent. This thought should stimulate us to employ diligently all the means Our Lord has put at our disposal. If all that is beautiful and all that can procure happiness in this world were placed within a man's reach, how eager would be his efforts to attain to it ; he would regard as light the sufferings he might have to undergo to secure this boon : and yet all this would only be a feeble shadow of the home of incomparable splendour and boundless happiness to which Our Lord invites me, and of which He has made the access so easy for me. Shall I not do all I can in order that sin may never exclude me from heaven nor even delay my entrance into it.

2ND POINT. The second fruit of the Ascension is that Our Lord is preparing a place for me. Thus He ceaselessly watches all my actions ; and if I live in the state of grace, for

each good action I perform He prepares a new and higher degree of happiness for me. He marks to my advantage every thought and desire by which I lift up my heart to Him, every word I utter in His praise, every action however small I perform for Him, every victory I gain over myself for His sake ; nothing escapes His notice. Truly this thought should fill me with courage and consolation, and should urge me to sanctify the smallest actions of my daily life.

3RD POINT. A third fruit of the Ascension is that we have now in heaven a most loving and all-powerful Intercessor pleading for us with His Heavenly Father. He entreats pardon for our sins, the graces we need to conquer the enemies of our souls, and all that we require to advance daily in holiness and merit. Have we then any reason to fear? Whatever be the difficulties I may or do encounter, Jesus is my Advocate, Intercessor and Protector.

CCXCII. OUR PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN

Imagine you behold Our Lord tenderly appealing to you to follow in His footsteps so that you may render yourself worthy of the kingdom of heaven.

Humbly ask Our Lord that He may inspire you with a firm resolution of serving Him faithfully and generously.

1st POINT.—Our first preparation for heaven must be directed to the acquisition of great purity of conscience. The Divine Spirit warns us that nothing defiled shall enter the kingdom of heaven. If then I have sinned in the past I must strive to blot out every stain sin has left on my soul. This sincere repentance will show itself in my fervent use of the sacraments, in my ready acceptance from God's hands of the sufferings of this life, and in my cultivating a spirit of deep humility and fervour in God's service. God indeed is truly kind and gracious, who instead of punishing me by exclusion from heaven deigns to supply me with so many means of escaping punishment, and purifying my soul of all that might delay my entrance into eternal happiness. It would be utter foolishness on my part, were I not to take advantage of God's infinite mercy.

2ND POINT.—A second preparation for heaven is to aim at adorning my soul with the virtues that will render it more worthy of the society of my God and Saviour, of Mary and the angels and saints. My daily life offers me innumerable occasions of practising humility, patience, charity, obedience and submission to God's holy will: these I must diligently turn to account. Thus I shall build up my future happiness, and daily render myself more fitted for the company of the Blessed.

3RD POINT.—A third preparation for Heaven is to aspire towards a greater union with God. My thoughts should frequently turn towards Him, seeing Him in all His creatures and in each event of my life. Aspirations of love should rise often from my heart whose every affection should be centred solely in Him. Such union with God, however, I cannot hope to acquire unless I purify my heart of all earthly desires, carefully avoid all deliberate sin and apply myself to the practice of virtue. My eternal happiness shall be exactly commensurate with the effort I expend on the preparation for it.

CCXCIII. THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him (I Cor. ii. 9).

Humbly pray Our Lord to withdraw your heart entirely from the things of this world, and to instil into it an ardent and practical desire of heaven.

1ST POINT.—Consider the surpassing splendour of the court of heaven. The beauty of this world arrests our gaze, and yet it is but the dwelling of the servants of the great King. He allows even His enemies to dwell in it and to enjoy it. What then must be the beauty of His own palace where He abides Himself with His children? If earthly kings can raise mansions for themselves of dazzling splendour, what may we not expect from Him whose riches are without limit and whose wisdom is divine? In this beautiful home dwells my heavenly Father; after a short time it will be mine, if I remain His child.

2ND POINT.—Consider how those dwelling in heaven enjoy an unclouded and boundless happiness. Their joy is not dimmed by any shadow of sorrow; no pain, no death, no anxiety, nor

fear of any of those trials that so often embitter our earthly career, can find entrance there. Not only shall all desires be fully satiated but God will increase in His saints the range and capacity of their desires that their joy may be more intense. What a grant reward I shall then receive for any sacrifice God's faithful service now demands of me.

3RD POINT.—Consider the joy resulting from the intercourse with the blessed in heaven. Even on earth, friends who love us and sympathize with us in our pleasures and in our pains, shed a perpetual glow of sunlight on our lives ; but what is this compared to the rapture of the presence of Jesus and Mary ? Can any earthly friends compare with the society of the angels and saints, so good, so holy and so full of love for us ? Our happiness will be even greater in that we shall be able to reciprocate their love.

4TH POINT.—Consider and try to understand a little the supreme delight of seeing and possessing God, the source of all beauty and holiness and goodness : and this will last for ever. Is there any suffering or labour too great to undergo in this life in prospect of such wonderful happiness hereafter ?

CCXCIV. THE APOSTLES RETURN TO JERUSALEM ; CHOICE OF MATTHIAS

After Our Lord's Ascension the Apostles returned to Jerusalem, their heart full of joy at the thought of the happiness and glory of their Divine Master. When they were gathered together Peter points out the necessity of replacing Judas in the apostolic college :—*And they appointed two : Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And praying, they said : Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place. And they gave them lots : and the lot fell upon Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts i. 23-26).*

Humbly pray Our Lord to teach you to put all your trust in Him while you are engaged in the work of your own sanctification and the salvation of souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider the Apostles as they return to Jerusalem. Jesus had promised to send them the Holy Ghost who would teach them all truth and indue them with power from on high, and had bid them await that event in the city. Far more clearly than hitherto did they realise how great was their need of light and strength from on high ; how powerless they were of themselves to acquire the sanctity necessary for the successful accomplishment of the mission entrusted to them, of leading the souls of men to God. In the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, however, they had received manifest proof of His power ; they were assured of His protection and were confident in His promises. Such were their feelings as they returned to the city. If we could realise what a great work it is to sanctify ourselves so as to answer to our high vocation and fulfil the great mission God has entrusted to us, we should likewise feel how utterly powerless we are of ourselves, and like the Apostles would put all our trust in God's all-powerful assistance. We must therefore never cease to pray fervently for this light and strength.

2ND POINT.—Consider how God chooses another to take the place which Judas had so wantonly lost. Though one of the twelve, yielding to his evil inclinations led him to a miserable fall and a still more wretched end. Let us learn from this example the necessity of being faithful to Our Lord's recommendation, to watch and pray. Although He has chosen us and given us many graces, yet neglect of prayer and of the mortification of our passions may likewise deprive us of the favours we have received, and cause us to fall away from Him and from our high vocation.

3RD POINT.—Consider how God manifested His choice of St. Matthias as an Apostle in preference to Joseph. Matthias accepted this choice with great simplicity and humility while Joseph conceived no feelings of envy or sadness because he was left aside. Each of them offers us a beautiful example both as to the manner in which we should receive honours if God selects us for them, and as to the readiness with which we should accept the lowest place if such be God's good pleasure.

CCXCV. THE APOSTLES PREPARE THEMSELVES TO RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST (*1st Meditation*).

All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren (Acts i. 14).

Humbly pray Our Lord to give you a high esteem and an ardent desire of His heavenly gifts.

1ST POINT.—Consider how ardently the Apostles desired that heavenly light and strength from above which according to Our Lord's promise the Holy Ghost would bring them. They were aware of the greatness of those gifts far surpassing anything the world can give, and they understood their absolute need of them in order to accomplish their mission. We too are in need of this heavenly wisdom and strength; we must be in the world but not of the world. Though our calling places us in continual contact with sin, yet we must keep our hearts unsullied by any stain of it. Our example no less than our words must bear a heavenly influence on the lives of others. Nevertheless we should keep in mind that by becoming priests we have not ceased to be men with all the evil propensities to which human nature is subject. It is only through divine assistance that we can keep these tendencies within rational bounds, and this assistance we may rely on as the work we are engaged in is God's work: He is far more deeply concerned in its success than we are.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Apostles retired into solitude in order to prepare themselves for the coming of the Paraclete. By the duties which our vocation involves we have to renounce solitude, yet if we would acquire those gifts of heavenly wisdom, we must lean towards this retirement and recollection with God. His voice is not audible to a dissipated mind. If then we would learn from Him the science of the saints, let us resolve to adopt the proper means. Like the Apostles, we should do whatever we can in order to remain united to Our Lord in heart and mind.

3RD POINT.—Consider the fervour with which the Apostles prayed for the fulfilment of the promises of Jesus. They understood God's gifts and hence fervently prayed for them. If we likewise realised the excellence of these gifts, we would desire them with ardour and eagerly implore God to grant them to us. Let us remember that although God imparts His graces to whom He wills, yet in His ordinary providence He dispenses them only to those who value them and fervently pray for them.

CCXCVI. THE APOSTLES PREPARE THEMSELVES
TO RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST (*2nd Meditation*).

The same prelude as in the preceding meditation.

Humbly ask Our Lord to give you a high esteem and an ardent desire for the reception of His heavenly gifts.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words: “they were persevering in prayer.” They did not cease to beg God for His favours till they had obtained them. Remembering the promise of their Divine Master: “ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you,” they were determined to obtain what they stood so much in need of, and they prayed till they were heard. Is this perseverance a character of my prayer? Do I not observe my confidence flagging when I fail to obtain my request at once? It may be that God refrains from granting my petition till I set a higher value on His gifts and show my entire confidence in His promises.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words: “they prayed all with one mind.” Although of different temperament and of varied social condition, they were all of one mind; their hearts were united in love towards their Lord and towards one another. Jesus could recognise in them His true disciples. Reflect how pleasing it is to Jesus to see those consecrated to His service closely united by charity. They indeed who practise this virtue will receive His choicest blessings.

3RD POINT.—Consider how they pray together with Mary the Mother of Jesus. They were conscious of Mary’s love for them; of her ardent desire of seeing them advance in holiness and become fit instruments in the hands of God. They were likewise aware of her wonderful power of intercession with her Divine Son, and therefore they invited her to join her powerful prayers to theirs. Have I not like motives urging me to have continual recourse to Mary’s intercession? I am in need of God’s blessing on my efforts to sanctify myself, and on all my enterprises and daily occupations undertaken for His glory.

CCXCVII. THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

And when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming : and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire : and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 1-4).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a great desire of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and with a firm resolution of making good use of them.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Holy Ghost descends suddenly on the Apostles and disciples. For the space of ten days they had prayed with great fervour and humble perseverance. They are now abundantly rewarded for their steady, persevering confidence. Many indeed may have been the graces we have lost because our prayers were deficient in these qualities of patience and perseverance ; we yielded to discouragement and ceased to pray with fervour. Let us then imitate the example of the Apostles. God never fails to hear a humble and persevering prayer, when what we ask for is beneficial to our souls.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Holy Ghost coming down on the Apostles manifested by external signs His internal operation in their souls :—suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, and there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire. As a wind purifies and cools the atmosphere, so did the grace of the Holy Spirit purify their hearts of all worldly attachments and quell in them all vain desires. As fire gives light and heat, so did the Divine Spirit enlighten the minds of the Apostles and inflame their hearts with an ardent love of God. Henceforth they would know God better and would perceive more clearly the inestimable value of the things of God and the nothingness of the things of earth ; a love stronger than death would urge them on to spend themselves and to suffer for God's glory and the salvation of souls. Reflect on what precious gifts these are, and on your own personal need of them. If like the Apostles you persevere in prayer, you too shall obtain them.

CCXCVIII. THE FRUITS OF THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST ON THE APOSTLES

And they spoke the word of God with confidence... And with great power did the apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord : and great grace was in them all (Acts iv. 31, 33).

Humbly pray Our Lord to enkindle in your heart an ardent desire of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

1ST POINT.—Consider how hitherto the Apostles were but ignorant fishermen who frequently failed to understand rightly the instructions of Jesus. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost they now became the light of the world. It is no less necessary for you to be enlightened by the Divine Spirit, and to receive from Him something of that heavenly wisdom He imparted to the Apostles. Resolve to put aside whatever obstacles might hinder His operation in your soul, and humbly pray Him to help you.

2ND POINT.—Consider the transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Apostles. Hitherto they were attached to the things of the world. More than once were they rebuked by Jesus for cherishing hopes of earthly greatness, honour and power. With the descent of the Holy Ghost, their earthly desires at once ceased. The world and its esteem and power had no longer any attraction for them. To be poor and contemptible for the sake of Our Lord and to suffer and spend themselves in His service became now their sole occupation. If we could attain to such dispositions, then truly would we be on the way to sanctity, then might we hope to become efficient instruments in the hands of God for the salvation of souls. Earnestly pray for the grace to obtain these dispositions.

3RD POINT.—Consider how before the descent of the Holy Spirit fear and want of courage appeared most prominently in the Apostles. They fled when Jesus was taken prisoner in Gethsemani ; soon after St. Peter through fear denied His Master. Nearly all of them abandoned Jesus during His passion. Now however that their hearts are inflamed with God's love, fear has no longer any place in their lives ; neither persecutions, nor torments, nor death itself can check them in their apostolate. Reflect upon your own weakness, on your inconsistency in carrying out your resolutions. The slightest difficulties

that present themselves in the fulfilment of your duties, cause you to slacken your efforts or perhaps to yield yourself up altogether to thoughts of discouragement. Again, does it not happen that you often dread a call to a generous sacrifice of some personal attachment? At such times you too are in need of strength. Resolve to ask for it humbly and perseveringly and you shall obtain it.

CCXCIX. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST—FEAR OF THE LORD

And with great power did the apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord: and great grace was in them all (Acts iv. 33).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a fervent desire of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

1ST POINT.—The Holy Ghost bestows His seven gifts on the souls of His children, that they may not only observe God's commandments, but become able to perform heroic acts of virtue. When we reflect then on the holiness of life God has a right to expect from priests, His representatives and ambassadors on earth, we shall appreciate more deeply the great need we have of those heavenly gifts. Without them we cannot hope to lead a life of detachment from the things of the world, of abnegation and generosity in the service of our Divine Master. Hence it is our duty to pray for these gifts with fervour and perseverance.

2ND POINT.—The first of these heavenly gifts is fear. It inspires the soul with a holy fear of offending the great God, at once so mighty and so good, and so deserving of all love. Anxiety and trouble do not result from this fear, but rather a shrinking from the very shadow of sin, and from the smallest thing that might displease God, infinite in majesty and goodness. Thus this filial fear of God is a most efficient means towards the acquisition of a great purity of conscience, so becoming in a priest. For that heart indeed should be pure which is, as it were, the perpetual dwelling place of Him who is all purity and holiness. These hands should be pure that each day raise the Divine Victim in oblation to the Eternal Father, and

distribute that same Victim as food to the faithful. How pure should be the lips of him through which God's word is continually being spread abroad throughout the world. Examine yourself, and see to what extent you have acquired this fear of God. Like the Apostles, in company with the Immaculate Mother of God, earnestly pray for this gift.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this gift of fear, leading directly towards a great purity of conscience, becomes at once a source of great peace and security. The assaults of the enemies of our soul leave us unshaken and undisturbed, for we know that we have been faithful to God because we feared Him, and in that fear we repose. Conclude with a fervent colloquy to the Holy Ghost asking Him to grant you this most valuable gift.

CCC. THE GIFT OF PIETY

And with great power did the apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord : and great grace was in them all (Acts iv. 33).

Humbly pray Our Lord to make you better understand the greatness of this gift of piety so that you may ardently desire it.

1ST POINT.—This gift of piety inspires the heart with a deep and loving reverence towards God and the things of God. It leads us to regard God, not as a severe Master always ready to punish, but as the best of all fathers worthy of the deepest reverence and love. Our confidence is augmented because this gift of piety directs our attention to God's infinite power, to His wonderful wisdom, and exceeding great love towards us. God's innumerable benefits are brought home to our minds, and our hearts overflow with love and gratitude towards Him. Thus piety makes the service of God a service of peace and joy. What a source of consolation this gift becomes for a priest in time of trial !

2ND POINT.—Consider how this gift of piety impels the soul endowed with it to take God's interests to heart. As a loving and dutiful son makes his father's interests his own, and considers it a duty of love to promote them to the extent of his power, so will the soul under the influence of this gift make

God's interests its own—love and honour all that God loves and honours: the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints, the Church and all that concerns her welfare, the poor and destitute and all who suffer. Hence piety becomes a mainspring in our enterprises of zeal and charity, reaping for us abundant spiritual fruit. A priest who possesses this gift will reverence and acknowledge God's right of having His interests promoted by him; if he be devoid of it, he will achieve little for God, and negligence and sloth will often characterize his undertakings. It needs but little reflection to see what a precious gift this is for a priest, and what an ardent desire every priest should have of acquiring it.

CCCI. THE GIFTS OF FORTITUDE AND COUNSEL

And with great power did the apostles give testimony, etc. (Acts iv. 33).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you understand better the value of the gifts of fortitude and counsel so that you may desire them.

1st Point.—If we wish to lead a life of holiness in accordance with our vocation and God's will in our regard; if we wish to devote ourselves to the salvation of souls in spite of all the sacrifices and self-denial such a work entails, then of necessity, through this gift of fortitude we must strengthen ourselves with the strength of God. Of ourselves we are indeed weak; the constant struggle against temptation and our evil inclinations often too easily disheartens us. Human respect interferes with our freedom of action, the allurements of pleasure or the dread of labour with what our conscience dictates to be our duty. How easily we are upset by small sacrifices demanded of us in the shape of some trivial suffering or humiliation. And yet the fulfilment of our mission in this life no less than the attainment of the crown God has prepared for us, necessitates a thorough conquest of such weaknesses and frailties of nature. The saints, naturally as weak as ourselves, gained this victory through that sublime fortitude with which the Holy Ghost had endowed them.

Considering then the great need we have of this heavenly gift, and the readiness of the Holy Spirit to accede to our humble and fervent prayers, let us resolve to beg for this favour with confidence.

2ND POINT.—The gift of counsel is a supernatural light by which the Holy Ghost teaches us how to progress in the way of perfection ; how to make use of all creatures merely for God's greater glory, and to render all the circumstances of our life new occasions of practising virtue. The effects of this gift admirably appear in the saints : whether they were in good or bad health, met with success or failure, honour or dishonour, enjoyed spiritual consolations or had to endure temptations and aridity in prayer, in all they found means of serving God and sanctifying themselves. They were taught by the Holy Ghost. If a man were taught a means of transforming into gold everything around him, he would indeed count himself fortunate ; yet the gift of counsel effects a similar transformation in the spiritual order, for it teaches us to transform every circumstance of our life into the imperishable gold of heavenly riches. We should therefore have an ardent desire of this gift, and prepare our hearts for it by fostering in them sentiments of humility, confidence in God and recollection of mind.

CCCII. THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

And with great power did the apostles give testimony, etc.
(Acts iv. 33).

Humbly pray that God may teach you the great value of this gift of knowledge, and inspire you with a fervent desire of it.

1ST POINT. Consider how this gift is a special supernatural help by which we can know and esteem at their true value the things of earth and the things of heaven. The vain glitter of worldly pomp and pleasures leads astray the hearts of many. Numberless persons ignorant of the priceless value of heavenly things conceive no desire of them, and either neglect or even despise them. A little child will readily part with a diamond of great value in exchange for a few valueless sweets. A man engaged in trade forestalls the danger of loss or ruin by his care in estimating the exact value of the wares he is dealing in. It is then most necessary for us to gain a true estimate of the things of God in order to ensure the success of the most important of all matters, our eternal salvation. Moreover those who desire to make progress in perfection must possess this gift of knowledge in a high degree. Let us therefore fervently pray that God's spirit may enlighten us.

2ND POINT.—Consider how extremely important is the acquisition of this gift of knowledge for a priest, consecrated to God and appointed to guide others on the paths of holiness. If it is the duty of anyone to detach his heart entirely from the things of this world and to become truly a man of God with his mind steadfastly directed to God and to His glory, it is the duty of a priest. Nevertheless how shall he in all things and under every circumstance be proof against the attractions of the things of this world, so that they may never induce him to swerve from the path he has chosen, if he be not endowed with that divine light which will give him a clear perception of the fleeting vanity of the things of this world? How shall he become duly diligent in acquiring greater and greater merits for heaven, if he fails to recognise their importance? He cannot be urged on towards a greater union with God here on earth and in heaven, if he is not penetrated with the idea of the incomparable happiness to be found in the possession of God.

3RD POINT.—Being convinced of the necessity of this gift of knowledge, remember that if you wish to obtain it, you must prepare your heart for its reception, you must cultivate a spirit of recollection and fervent prayer, and accustom yourself to the practice of true humility. God manifests Himself to the humble and turns away from the proud. Let your ardent desire of obtaining this gift appear in your generous resolutions.

CCCCIII. THE GIFTS OF INTELLIGENCE AND WISDOM

And with great power did the apostles give testimony, etc. (Acts. iv. 33).

Humbly pray Our Lord to teach you the inestimable value of these gifts and to give you an ardent desire of them.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the gift of intelligence is a supernatural light by which we are enabled to penetrate deeper and deeper into the truths of faith and to enjoy a clearer perception of them. Those who study the various natural sciences, find an intense intellectual pleasure in pursuing their investigations, and in discovering continually, as it were, new horizons. When we consider the knowledge of God as an

object of our mental pursuit we must recognise that there is no study more sublime, more worthy of the exercise of man's faculties and more satisfying to the soul. God, the ocean of all beauty, holiness and perfection, His mysteries, His infinitely wise Providence, His action in the universe, in the Church, in our soul : all these present to us limitless degrees of investigation. The deeper this knowledge penetrates, the more it becomes a source of spiritual joy, courage and confidence in God ; His love is enkindled in our hearts, our souls are lifted up in admiration towards God, and we come to realise better the emptiness of all created things compared with Him. Such was the heavenly light that made St. Ignatius exclaim, " How vile this earth becomes when I look up to heaven ! " Reflect on what a fruitful means of sanctification this gift is for the soul possessing it. Hence, pray for it with fervour, and resolve to put aside whatever obstacle occurs to you in the way of its reception.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the gift of wisdom is the crown of all the rest. Through it the soul attains, as it were, a foretaste of heaven. Its full possession renders the soul incapable of finding delight in anything but in God ; to love God and to be loved by Him is its only joy. It sees God in all His creatures and loves Him in them,—in superiors, and therefore obedience is rendered with joy and alacrity,—in brethren, and therefore charity becomes a perpetual flow of kindness and benevolence,—in little children, in the poor, and in sinners, and therefore they become objects of love and mercy. Crosses, sufferings and humiliations designate for such a soul the hand of God, and it embraces them with love and fortitude ; toilsome labour imposed by duty is executed with care and exactitude as a service ordained by God. Of all this we find examples in the lives of the saints. It is indeed a great gift, and to this the Holy Ghost testifies : " Wisdom is better than all the most precious things : and whatsoever may be desired cannot be compared with it " (Prov. viii. 11). Fervent then should be our prayer for it. Yet remember that the sensual man cannot understand the things of God ; the more you repress your evil inclinations, the more fit will you become for obtaining this great gift from God.

CCCIV. THE BLESSED TRINITY

Represent to yourself the splendour of the court of heaven, and the thousands of angels and saints surrounding the throne of God and giving glory to Him.

Humbly pray that God may inspire you with a deep reverence towards His infinite Majesty, and with an ardent gratitude for all the benefits you have received from Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider who God is. He is the Infinite Being, the King of kings. So great is His perfection that no understanding but His own can comprehend it; so exalted His majesty that all earthly greatness is but a dim shadow of it. His power knows no limits; all is subject to Him, in heaven, on earth and in hell. All the treasures of earth are His; and so wonderful is His infinite goodness, holiness and beauty that those who know Him as the angels and saints cannot be drawn away from Him. Reflect that we are always in the presence of this Infinite Majesty. How reverently we should recall it, how respectfully we should address Him. How we should fear to do His work negligently. What an honour and privilege it is for us to be allowed to call Him, Our Father! To know that One so wise, so good, so powerful, is ever watching over us and is ever directing all things towards our welfare ought to inspire us with great confidence. To be united to God, so great and so holy, is truly the most glorious fact of our existence: to be separated from Him is our greatest misfortune.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—three Persons in one God—remind us of the immense and innumerable benefits we have received from God, and of the deep gratitude we owe Him. The benefit of our creation: whatever we are, whatever we have, whatever supplies our needs, is useful to us or gives us pleasure, proceeds from His bounty. The benefit of redemption: if we are now God's children, if heaven is open to us, we owe it to God the Son, made Man for us. Though infinitely above us, He has deigned to become one of us, to suffer and to die for us on a cross that we might be delivered from the slavery of Satan and be reconciled to God. The benefit of our sanctification: the graces we have received are without number though the least of them could not be purchased with all the treasures of the earth. Through sanctifying grace God has made us partakers of His

own nature, and fitted us for heaven. Reflect on the long succession of graces by which God has led you on towards the acquisition of eternal happiness. We are ungrateful when we forget God's benefits. The contemplation of them should cause me to exclaim, "What shall I return to the Lord for all He has given me?" Ought not then my heart to be enkindled with an ardent desire and firm purpose of living only for God?

CCCV. THE BENEFITS OF GOD IN THE NATURAL ORDER

Remember that whatsoever you are and whatsoever you have proceeds from God.

Humbly pray Our Lord to strengthen your purpose of making good use of the benefits you have received from Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider all the natural gifts you have received from God: gifts so vast that you cannot enumerate them, and many of them so valuable that you would not part with them for any earthly treasure. Your sense of sight, your sense of hearing, your faculty of speech and your power of moving and of working, your immortal soul, your understanding, will and memory, your parents, your friends and every creature that is of use to you or gives you pleasure: all these are gifts of God. Can any benefactor be compared with this supreme Benefactor? Great is our duty of gratitude towards Him; the service we render Him should be accompanied with joy and alacrity. Whenever we make use of any of those benefits to offend Him who has bestowed them on us, and who ceases not to preserve them for us, we conduct ourselves with shameful ingratitude. Nevertheless, this is what we have done each time we offended Him by sin. Repent sincerely; renew your purpose of using God's benefits henceforth only for His glory.

2ND POINT.—Consider that it is not only a duty of gratitude but one of strict justice for us to make use of God's gifts according to His holy will. Although God has given them to us, He yet retains supreme dominion over them. If then we make use of them against His will, we rob Him of what belongs to Him. This is what we have frequently done in the course of our life, and perhaps is what we are still doing. Let us keep

well in mind that we shall have to render a strict account hereafter of the use we have made of each of those gifts God has so generously bestowed on us.

3RD POINT.—Consider that all those gifts have been given to us in order to help us towards the sanctification and salvation of our souls. To allow them to become the cause of our spiritual ruin, or an obstacle in the way of our progress in perfection would be the extreme of folly. Yet this is what men do, and perhaps we ourselves have been doing, whenever we allowed those gifts to interfere with the duty or service we owed towards our Creator. Let us abase ourselves then before God on account of the bad use we have so frequently made of His gifts. Let us examine our actual failings in this matter and form good resolutions.

CCCVI. THE SUPERNATURAL GIFTS OF GOD.

He that is mighty hath done great things to me (Luke i. 49).

Humbly pray Our Lord to teach you to understand better the greatness of His supernatural gifts, and to give you an ardent desire of them.

1ST POINT.—Consider the priceless value of the supernatural gifts God has bestowed on you. As heaven surpasses earth, so do these gifts surpass the highest natural gifts. Through sanctifying grace you are made the child of God and heir to the kingdom of heaven; in the words of St. Peter, a partaker of the divine nature. What princely dignity can be found on earth to compare with this? A truly wonderful right is conferred on you, exalting and ennobling you. Through actual grace, by the virtues of faith, hope and charity, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, God ceases not to enlighten you with His own wisdom, to strengthen you with His own strength. He is constant in aiding you to escape evil, to gain victories over the enemies of your soul, and to lead a life of holiness in accordance with your dignity of child of God. By these gifts new heavenly riches are placed each day at our disposal compared to which all the treasures of earth are but dust. Great then should be your esteem of these gifts. You should carefully guard them, and be eager to make use of every occasion of acquiring them.

2ND POINT.—Consider the many and powerful means which God places at your disposal in order to obtain those heavenly treasures, and to preserve and develop them in view of your eternal crown. His word is present to console, strengthen and invigorate your spiritual life. His guidance appears in the Church and in your superiors. His sacraments and in particular the Holy Eucharist—the very source of all graces—are for you fountains of spiritual refreshment. God is ceaselessly providing means to help you on towards a happy eternity. Truly God's munificence towards you should evoke a sense of wonder and admiration in your heart.

3RD POINT.—Consider how foolish in a matter of our own welfare and how ungrateful towards God we should be, if through sloth or negligence we failed to make use of the opportunities we have of amassing riches for heaven. When a man of the world deterred by idleness or fear of labour abandons opportunities for acquiring wealth and thus falls into a state of poverty, he is regarded as a fool; and such a man becomes still more deserving of contempt, should he squander what he actually possesses. What then must be said of those who neglect the abundant and efficacious means God supplies them with in order to gather heavenly treasures? Bitter indeed shall be their regret at the hour of death.

PART V.

*Meditations on the Feasts of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin
and the Saints.*

OCTAVE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

CCCVII. ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

Represent to yourself Our Lord seated in the midst of His Apostles at the Last Supper, and pronouncing for the first time the words of consecration.

Humbly pray Our Lord to excite in your heart a deep reverence and an ardent love for the Blessed Sacrament.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Jesus instituted this Sacrament of His love on the very eve of His passion. All His approaching sufferings were vividly present to His mind: the cruel torments, the bitter humiliations, and the anguish of His holy Mother and his friends. He foresaw how His Apostles would abandon Him—the betrayal of one and the denial of another. Nevertheless, though overwhelmed by these distressing thoughts, His loving heart is planning a new and most wonderful token of His friendship for us. But the outrages inflicted on His person will not cease with His passion. To the mind of Christ is present the future ages in which His gift of love will be scoffed at by unbelievers, be treated with coldness, ingratitude and even sacrilege by His own children. Still what he so clearly foresaw could not restrain His love. Admire the wonderful love of God for His little and sinful creatures. Resolve to repair the ingratitude offered to Him by an assiduous and tender devotion towards the Holy Eucharist.

2ND POINT.—Consider what must have been the thoughts and feelings of Jesus at that moment about His future priests and ourselves to whom He would commit the perpetuation of this Holy Mystery. Doubtless His Divine Heart was rent with pain and anguish when the sacrileges, the acts of irreverence,

coldness and neglect on the part of His own chosen ministers arose before His vision. Yet He must have turned for courage and consolation to the thought of His many fervent priests who by their zeal, reverence, gratitude and confidence, would make Him the centre of their lives, and exert themselves to their utmost to draw men's hearts towards Him. What were Our Lord's thoughts at that moment with regard to us? If hitherto we have not given Him the due return claimed by His love, let us now resolve to do so.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Jesus chose this time for the institution of the Holy Eucharist that He might make it a perpetual reminder of His passion and death. From this we must conclude how ardently He desires us to remember all He has done and suffered for our sake, so that our love and confidence in Him may never grow weak. Such a mark of gratitude should be shown by all and especially by priests whose chief aim should be to satisfy this desire of the Sacred Heart of our Divine Master.

CCCVIII. ON THE PLACE WHERE THE HOLY EUCHARIST WAS INSTITUTED

And he said to them : Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water : follow him into the house where he entereth in. And you shall say to the goodman of the house : The master saith to thee : Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the pasch with my disciples ? And he will show you a large dining room, furnished. And there prepare (Luke xii, 10-12).

Humbly ask Our Lord to make you better realise the happiness of receiving Him as a guest in your heart, and to aid you in preparing for His reception.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the man to whom Our Lord sent His Apostles deemed himself highly favoured, as we may conclude from the readiness with which he places the best room of his house at the disposal of Jesus. We however know Jesus better than he could have known Him : for us He is Our God, our Creator, our supreme benefactor yielding up His life on a cross for our redemption. How grateful then should be our

feelings towards Jesus at the honour He confers on us each time He comes to dwell as a guest in our hearts ! Eagerly should we await those occasions in order to show Him our respect, love and gratitude.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this man joyfully accedes to the request of Jesus through the Apostles, Peter and John ; his large dining room, ready furnished is opened to them. When Jesus desires to visit us, He seeks our heart wherein He may dwell. If our hearts are to become worthy dwelling places for such a Master, they must be broad and generous, ready for any sacrifice His glory may demand, stimulated by the sole desire of pleasing Him in all things. Narrow indeed would be His place of abode within us, if we allowed our hearts to be ruled by self-love, and to shrink from the least sacrifice or pain. Let us therefore furnish and adorn them with virtue, so that they may daily become more worthy for the reception of this Divine Guest. Surely He deserves such a preparation for His coming.

3RD POINT.—Consider what abundant blessings Jesus showered on this house where He had been so well received. It was there that the Holy Eucharist was instituted, the first Mass was celebrated, the first priests consecrated. It was there that Jesus appeared to His Apostles after the resurrection, and conferred on them the power of remitting sin. Again, it was there that the Holy Ghost descended upon them filling them with His heavenly gifts. Let us likewise prepare our hearts so that they may become worthy habitations for our Divine Guest who is not less ready to shower upon us His most precious blessings.

CCCIX. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples and said : Take ye and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice he gave thanks and gave to them, saying : Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 26-28).

Humbly pray Our Lord to enkindle in your heart a great love towards the Blessed Sacrament.

1ST POINT.—Consider yourself as present at the Last Supper, listening to the words of Jesus. Reflect on the love with which His Divine Heart was aflame towards us at that moment. Though infinite in majesty, He condescends to remain hidden under the appearances of a little bread and wine, and thus to set Himself entirely at the disposal of men ; this He does, fully conscious of the meagre return His love would receive. What an ardent love He must have for us, to abide in our tabernacles night and day, to give Himself to us as the daily nourishment of our souls, and to take up His dwelling within our poor sinful hearts. Let these thoughts incite in us a greater love and gratitude towards Jesus in the Eucharist.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Our Lord's ardent desire for our sanctification appears manifest in this institution of the Holy Eucharist. Such is the reason which accounts for His selecting this means of remaining in the midst of His children throughout the whole world. However ungrateful they be, He opens to them a refuge in their dangers, and an inexhaustible source of heavenly blessings and graces. Our great God so ardently desires to sanctify us that He imparts to us, through this heavenly food of the Eucharist, His own life so that we may live by Him and in Him. And it is that same desire of our sanctification that constantly maintains these stupendous miracles by which God multiplies His holy Presence throughout the world. It would be therefore shameful ingratitude on the part of us especially, who have so close a share in all these favours, not to respond generously to so loving a desire of Jesus. Nay, reason itself demands that we should take advantage of such a wonderful and efficacious means of sanctification.

CCCX. ON HOLY COMMUNION

Imagine you behold the Apostles receiving Holy Communion for the first time from the hands of Jesus.

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to realise better the wonderful excellence of this gift and to give you an ardent desire of it.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord gives Himself entirely to you in Holy Communion,—He gives you His body and blood, His soul and His divinity. It was not enough to deliver

His body to be torn with cruel wounds and nailed on a cross, to shed the last drop of His blood, and to allow His soul to be overwhelmed with an agony of sorrow and shame ; His love prompted Him to do still more, and He became the food and constant source of life of our souls. Such unbounded generosity should evoke our ceaseless admiration, and on the other hand, should arouse feelings of shame and grief within us at the little generosity we show Him in return. When He asks from us, not the sacrifice of our body or our blood, but the sacrifice of some paltry insignificant pleasure to which our pride attaches us, or of some little comfort that our self-love claims, how often we deem it too much and refuse it. Nevertheless He is our great God, our Creator, our Saviour to whom we owe all that we possess. Let us humble ourselves before Him, and renew our purpose of giving ourselves entirely to Him.

2ND POINT.—Consider the many ways in which we may give ourselves entirely to Our Lord. We can give Him our body and our blood by the practice of angelical chastity, by the mortification of our senses, by spending our health and strength in His holy service. Is it not most just and glorious that we should do so ? We can give Him our soul by detaching it more and more from the things of the world, by purifying it from everything that opposes our more intimate union with Him, and by applying our heart and mind to that union. This is nothing more than what He well deserves of us, and moreover it is all to our own advantage ; herein we shall find a source of strength, wisdom, peace and happiness in this world and hereafter. We can give ourselves to Him by the generous practice of all the virtues He wishes to see in us,—such as humility, obedience, charity, patience, and by making willingly the little sacrifices the practice of these virtues involves. Let us then say to ourselves : Jesus, my God has given and gives Himself entirely to me, poor and sinful as I am. It is only meet and just that I should live henceforth only for Him who deserves infinitely more than all I can give Him.

CCCXI. THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Represent to yourself Our Lord pronouncing for the first time at the Last Supper the words of consecration.

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a great esteem and a deep reverence for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and with a practical desire of rendering yourself more and more worthy to celebrate it.

1ST POINT.—Our Divine Lord's intention in instituting the Holy Eucharist was not restricted to the desire of remaining in our midst as a loving Father among His children and of giving Himself to us as the heavenly food of our souls; He likewise intended to establish a perpetual sacrifice which would be the selfsame Sacrifice as that of the Cross differing only in the manner of oblation. This unbloody renewal of Christ's oblation on Calvary was to be throughout the whole world, and to endure to the end of time. We cannot conceive a sacrifice more sublime in which the Victim offered to God is of infinite value, and the Priest or offerer is the Son of God Himself. Herein are renewed the wonders of the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord; and again it unfolds to us in an admirable manner God's infinite wisdom, power and goodness. As Jesus began His human life at the moment of His incarnation, so does He begin His sacramental life at the moment of the sacrificial act during Mass. He again puts Himself in the state of a Victim, renewing what He did for us on the Cross; and, in a most transcending manner, though still remaining truly man, He becomes present in the Eucharist in the whole and in every part after the manner of a spirit, thus renewing the miracles of His resurrection. With sentiments of deep humility let us adore the wisdom and goodness of God who operates such wonders on behalf of His poor creatures. We should pray that these considerations may impart to us the highest esteem and reverence for this most sublime function—the Sacrifice of the Mass.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the institution of this Sacrifice ought to be for us a source of joy and gratitude. Through it we can give to God the glory and tender Him the thanksgiving which we owe Him. The Mass supplies us with a most efficacious means for obtaining true contrition and remission of our sins together with many other graces and blessings. Be thankful for this great gift with which nothing else on earth can compare, and be diligent in using it.

3RD POINT.—Consider how you have been chosen by God to act for Our Lord and with Him, nay to personify Him in the offering of this sublime Sacrifice. What an honour for you to be endowed with powers truly divine ! Yet, do not forget the obligation you are under of rendering yourself worthy of so sublime a dignity, of bringing due dispositions to this tremendous function. An ardent faith, a sincere humility, a deep reverence and piety should characterize him who celebrates these divine mysteries. Do I make a due preparation and a fervent thanksgiving ?

CCCXII. JESUS, IN THE EUCHARIST, OUR REFUGE AND HELP

Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened : and I will refresh you (Matt. xi. 28).

Ask Our Lord to inspire you with a boundless confidence in Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord during His mortal life was the refuge of the afflicted ; how the sick came to Him to be cured, the ignorant to be taught, the sorrowful to be consoled, the sinners to be pardoned and reconciled with God. To all Jesus showed Himself kind and merciful ; no sinner approaching Him with a humble and repentant heart was ever rejected by Him, nor was any sufferer dismissed unconsolated. His adorable Heart overflowing with mercy and compassion remains unchanged, and from the tabernacle Jesus still calls to Him all who labour and are burdened, always anxious to assuage our ills and console us in our distress.

2ND POINT.—Consider the almighty power of Our Lord who by a word restored to the lame the use of their limbs, to the blind their sight, to the deaf their hearing ; at His command lepers were cleansed, the dead arose to life. By the power of His grace He banished devils from the possessed and transformed such sinners as Mary Magdalen and the penitent thief into saints. Jesus residing in our tabernacles has still the same power and is in no degree less merciful to those who approach Him with humble confidence.

3RD POINT.—Consider the eagerness with which we should approach Him to whom the sorely tried and afflicted have never appealed in vain. Our trials may take the form of temptations, of spiritual aridity and desolation, or of discouragement at the sight of our personal weakness and our inability of maintaining a constant struggle against our inordinate propensities. Whatever our trial be, let us ever keep in mind the loving invitation of Jesus. We should accustom ourselves to take refuge with Him in every danger or perplexity.

CCCXIII. JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST, OUR BEST FRIEND

A faithful friend is a strong defence : and he that hath found him hath found a treasure (Eccclus. vi. 14).

Humbly pray Our Lord to teach you to bind yourself to Him with the most intimate ties of friendship.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the words of Scripture quoted above, though true of an earthly friend, are still more infallibly true when that friend is Our Lord Himself. To realise His sentiments towards us we need only recall what He has done and suffered for our sake. He Himself testifies that there is no greater proof of love than to lay down one's life for one's friends ; and this He did for us. Again, what friend can compare with Jesus in wisdom, holiness and power ? We can find no one who will be so merciful to us in our deficiencies, so compassionate in our sorrows, and so anxious to render us assistance. How can we ever give due thanks to our great God for admitting us, little and unworthy as we are, to His incomparable friendship ? To render ourselves more deserving of it should be our main purpose.

2ND POINT.—Consider all the advantages that ensue from this divine friendship. When we are in sorrow or in need we find consolation in a friend to whom we may open our heart and unfold whatever oppresses us. However holy, wise, trustworthy or powerful such an earthly friend may be, he cannot compare with Jesus. If we are in need of sympathy, the Heart of Jesus is overflowing with compassion ; if we should find difficulty in expressing our sorrows, we know that Jesus understands them perfectly ; if we desire counsel, His infinite wisdom

is at our disposal to guide us ; in our moments of weakness Jesus will be our strength. He will never deceive us, nor will He ever abandon in life or in death those who trust in His friendship. How then can we become unmindful of such a Friend, seeing the advantages that accrue to us ? Yet there are many christians who neglect and forget Him. Are we ourselves to be found in their number ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how much more intimate this friendship should be between Jesus and His priests. His work and His interests are entrusted to their care ; the successful issue of their ministry can only be ensured by the special blessings of Jesus ; their lives must be a copy of His own. The priest therefore is an object of His peculiar love, and it is but natural that one chosen for so sublime a function should endeavour to reciprocate that love. Before all others, the priest should be the friend of Jesus in the tabernacle whence he derives light, strength and consolation in his labours.

CCCIV. JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST, OUR TEACHER

Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors (Prov. viii. 34).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with an ardent and practical desire of learning from Him the science of the saints.

1ST POINT.—Consider how needful is this science of the saints to a priest, and what a happiness it ought to be for him to have so good and wise a teacher as Our Lord dwelling in the tabernacle. On account of his high vocation he should seriously consider his advancement in perfection. If God sent one of His saints to guide and teach him, he should indeed be grateful. He has done even more ; He has placed Himself at his disposal. The priest who desires to acquire heavenly wisdom can learn it from Jesus who will not only teach him but give him strength to practise it. Pass in review the many and profound lessons of holiness acquired by the saints at the foot of the tabernacle ; resolve to imitate their example.

2ND POINT.—Consider the principal lessons taught by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament ; those alone understand them who approach Him with a heart and mind susceptible to His holy

doctrine. How eloquently He teaches you to love to be unknown and to be held as nothing, seeing that He, the God of infinite Majesty, remains hidden under the humble sacramental species, concealing not only His divine perfections but even the glory of His sacred humanity. Infinite Wisdom chose the silence of the tabernacle ; the Almighty stripped Himself of the attribute of His power. How eloquently He teaches you obedience when He who rules the universe submits Himself to you, becomes present at your command, and places Himself in your hands to be handled at your pleasure. Eloquent indeed is the lesson He conveys of prayer and recollection by His ceaseless intercession for you day and night in the solitude of the tabernacle. His endurance for your sake of so many outrages, and sacrileges, so much ingratitude and indifference teaches you meekness and patience. How He teaches you generosity and self-sacrificing love by giving Himself over entirely to you so little worthy to receive and possess Him. And lastly He teaches you the grand lesson of zeal for souls by His example in abiding there day and night to draw them to Himself, to feed them and to offer Himself in sacrifice on their behalf. Truly may He say :—I am the way, the truth and the life. Let us then resolve after the example of Mary Magdalen, to come often to Him, and to sit at His feet where we may hope that our hearts will be penetrated with His holy lessons.

CCCXV. ON THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Behold Our Lord as He is represented appearing to Blessed Margaret Mary, and showing her His Sacred Heart surmounted by a cross, encircled with thorns and with flames bursting forth from it.

Humbly entreat Our Lord to increase your devotion to His Sacred Heart.

1ST POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary ; “ Behold this Heart that has loved men so much.” Behold that Heart hypostatically united to the Divinity, and therefore endowed with all the divine perfections, and an object infinitely worthy of your adoration and all your love. That Heart has been consumed with love for men. Its love

for them was so ardent that it embraced with readiness a life of suffering and privation, the torments and the ignominy of the cross. So great was the love of that Heart for men that it impelled the God-Man, infinite in majesty, to conceal Himself under the sacramental species, in spite of the unspeakable outrages, blasphemies and sacrileges with which that love would be requited, in order that they might become one with Himself. To live in their midst and to become intimately united with them is the insatiable thirst of that Divine Heart. Bow down in humble adoration, admire this mysterious love of Jesus for you. Repent of your coldness and ingratitude towards Him, and resolve to love Him in return with a true and generous love.

2ND POINT.—Consider the words of Our Lord : “ And in return I receive only ingratitude and forgetfulness.” Think of the multitudes that do not know Him and refuse to acknowledge Him. Think of the innumerable christians who recognise Him as their God and Saviour, but whose hearts are set on other things. Among such christians, how many often blaspheme Him and outrage Him by sacrilege ! Turn your thought upon yourself and your sins by which you have grieved that most loving Heart. How often you have treated Him with neglect, coldness and ingratitude ! At the sight of this spectacle of unrequited love your heart should be penetrated with sorrow and repentance, and with an ardent desire of making reparation in every possible manner for the indifference and coldness of men.

3RD POINT.—Consider how Our Lord complains in a special way of the ingratitude and coldness of those consecrated to Him. Such persons are the peculiar objects of His love and benefits ; they know much better than others how well He deserves all their reverence and love, and in so far is their ingratitude the greater. Examine your life and see wherein lie the deficiencies that Jesus expects you to correct. Are you diligent in all that regards the Blessed Sacrament, the altar, the tabernacle ? Is your internal reverence marked by exquisite cleanliness in the altar service, linen, etc. ? Do you bring to the celebration of the holy Mass that purity of heart, that careful preparation, that reverence and exact attendance to rubrics, that piety and modesty so great a function demands ? Are your visits to Our Lord in this Sacrament of His love frequent ? Do you endeavour to make reparation for the offences you and others have committed towards Jesus in the Eucharist ? Do you honour the Sacred

Heart by some special practice of devotion, and try to enkindle and spread the same devotion in others ? Reflect on the great blessings in store for priests who are diligent in these points, and form some good and practical resolutions.

CCCXVI. THE CIRCUMCISION (*1st January*).

And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb (Luke ii. 21).

Humbly pray Our Lord to strengthen your purpose to give yourself entirely to Him during the coming year.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this ceremony of the circumcision was established by God so that by it the new-born among the Jews might become members of the people of God. Our Lord as the Son of God was exempt from this law, and the more so as the ceremony supposed those new-born children to be sinners. For Jesus then it was as humiliating as it was painful. Yet, such was the ordinance of the Divine Majesty whose glorification Jesus, as Man, set before all other considerations. Accordingly He submitted to this extreme humiliation of being reckoned as a sinner—He, the sinless One,—and willingly underwent the bodily pain which the ceremony exacted. In like manner, during the coming year God will demand many sacrifices from you in the fulfilment of your duties,—at times perhaps under pain of sin, oftener in the interests of His glory. To adhere to your duty under all circumstances and to deny yourself in matters not of strict obligation, but merely out of zeal for God's glory, will often cause you to undergo bodily suffering and fatigue, contempt and humiliation. Recall then what Jesus did for you on this day of His circumcision, and resolve with God's help to be generous.

2ND POINT.—Consider those words : “ And His name was called Jesus which was called by the angel.” This holy name signifies Saviour ; it was, therefore, an indication of His mission upon earth. How truly Jesus verified all that this name implied, throughout His earthly life. No hardship, however great, nay death itself, could make Him swerve in the least detail from accomplishing His divine mission. In your baptism you

received the title of christian, that is, the disciple of Jesus Christ; in your ordination you received the name of priest. Think what these names imply for you, and what God expects from you. As a christian, He expects you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ not in name only but in deed,—to rule your life by the lessons and maxims of your Divine Master and to follow in His footsteps. As a priest, He expects you to be a true representative of Him who has anointed you as His ambassador on earth, and therefore, to retrace more and more in yourself the image of your Lord—the virtues that shone in Him so eminently, His humility, purity, obedience, zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Examine yourself and see whether you fall short of these expectations or not. Form good resolutions for the beginning of the year, and pray for God's help to adhere to them.

CCCXVII. FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

(January).

And the angel said to her : Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son : and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High (Luke i. 30-32).

Humbly pray Our Lord to teach you to know Him better and to fill your heart with love, confidence and gratitude towards Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the Holy Name of Jesus reminds us of the benefits of the Redemption, and therefore ought to inspire us with the deepest gratitude towards our Redeemer. If we had fallen into the hands of cruel enemies, and were being led away by them into captivity, to be separated from those we love, and to be in hourly expectation of the direst torture that intense hatred could suggest, finally to be subjected to a most cruel death, what would be our feelings of gratitude towards a friend who taking pity on us should rescue us from the hands of our tormentors at the cost of great sacrifice? Never would we cease to thank him for such a benefit, and we would seek for opportunities of proving to him our gratitude by deeds. How great then should be our gratitude towards

Jesus who has saved us from a slavery a thousand times worse than an earthly slavery, from torments both in intensity and in duration far surpassing any torments that men can inflict. This is the friendship Jesus has shown in order to recover for us our heavenly inheritance.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the Holy Name of Jesus reminds us of all that our Saviour has done and suffered for our salvation—the scourges, the crown of thorns, the journey to Calvary, and the Cross. What friend, even a father or a mother, would undergo such suffering on behalf of those linked by the closest ties? And Jesus, Our God, gave us this exceeding great proof of His love. He had no need of us, and our sins had rendered us altogether unworthy of His regard. How can we ever repay Him? Resolve that each time you pronounce the Holy Name to-day, you will lift up your heart in humble thanksgiving towards Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider that even now, “there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.” Jesus is our refuge and protection against all our enemies. He is the hope of sinners, all kindness to those that invoke Him, all goodness to those that seek Him, all strength and sweetness for those that find Him. Let these thoughts banish all discouragement from your heart, and fill you with confidence.

CCXXVIII. FEAST OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

(July).

Imagine you behold Our Lord as He is dying on the cross, covered with wounds and blood.

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your love for Him and to inspire you with an ardent zeal for souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord has shed His Blood, even to the last drop, for the salvation of souls. Such is then the price He has paid for your soul: “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver...but with the precious blood of Christ” (I Peter i. 18-19). Since Jesus has set such a high value on your soul, ought not you to value it in the same way? Jesus has not deemed any sacrifice too great to

save it ; you ought to embrace willingly at least those sacrifices necessary to insure its salvation. The souls committed to your care have been bought by Jesus at the same price. If then you truly love Him, you will love those souls that are so dear to Him. How you should tremble lest through your negligence, your tepidity in prayer, your want of generosity, any of these souls might be lost.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this precious Blood shed so profusely for you is the pledge of Our Lord's boundless love for you. Having given so much for you and bought you at such a price, He can never abandon you without your deliberately renouncing Him yourself. Doubtless those who are beset on all sides with anxieties and temptations should derive consolation from this reflection. With such a pledge of love present to my mind I can never entertain thoughts of diffidence or discouragement.

3RD POINT.—Consider that this most precious Blood is the price paid by Jesus for the innumerable graces you have received, and are continually receiving for your salvation and sanctification. Therefore, you should set a keen value on them, and be anxious lest you might lose any of them. How diligent you ought to be in profiting by all the occasions that at every moment present themselves, so as to merit an increase of these graces.

CCCXIX. FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (*14th September*).

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. vi. 14).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a deep reverence and love for His Cross.

1ST POINT. Consider how in instituting this feast the Church wishes to promote in her children veneration and love for the Cross. For all christians, learned and unlearned, it is the great book whence they are taught the science of the saints. How it speaks to us of God's love towards us ; how eloquently it preaches to us repentance for our sins, gratitude to our

Redeemer, zeal for souls, humility, obedience, patience and every virtue which should distinguish the true disciples of Jesus. Let the Cross be henceforth my book ; let me often dwell in thought on that holy image, so that I may learn from it these beautiful lessons. If I do so, it will become for me a powerful incentive to fervour in God's service.

2ND POINT.—Consider with what reverence we should make the sign of the Cross which we so frequently repeat in the course of the day. What a beautiful and powerful prayer it is ! By this sign we consecrate anew our body and soul to God, we profess ourselves to be His, and thus place ourselves under His protection. The sign of the Cross is our strength against Satan of whose overthrow it is the symbol. Recall all the blessings you have received through this sign. In this sign the waters of baptism cleansed your soul, the words of forgiveness were pronounced on you in the sacrament of penance, your forehead was anointed in confirmation, and your senses shall be sanctified on your deathbed in Extreme Unction. It is this sign that will consecrate your remains unto the glorious resurrection. Ought you not therefore to entertain a deep reverence for this holy sign, and to resolve always to make it with the spirit of faith and with due respect and recollection ?

3RD POINT.—Consider how we should also learn to value highly the cross of suffering and humiliation by which Our Lord signs His elect and unites them to His own Cross, so that they may one day have a greater share in His glory. Jesus has made our cross light and has sanctified it. If we accept it with love, or at least with entire resignation to His holy will, the cross will be for us a powerful means of progressing in the spiritual life. Is this the spirit in which you regard the cross ? Do you accept your troubles, pains, sufferings and humiliations from God's hands as so many marks of His love ? What a loss you are incurring if you fail to cherish and cultivate this love and esteem for the cross ! .

CCCXX. THE PURIFICATION (2nd February).

And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord (Luke ii. 22).

Humbly pray that you may learn to imitate the virtues of your heavenly Mother. .

1ST POINT.—Consider how Mary gives us an admirable example of humility in fulfilling the law of purification. She was immaculate in her conception, and had been confirmed in grace. No shadow or stain of sin had ever sullied the lustrous purity of her soul. Her becoming the Mother of God had made this wonderful purity still more resplendent. She was then in no need whatever of any legal purification. Moreover her high dignity rendered her exempt from this law. Mary, however, like her Divine Son, was penetrated with the deepest reverence for the ordinances of God and for all that concerned His glory, and accordingly she submitted to the law which put her on a level with any ordinary woman. How far perhaps we may still find ourselves from imitating these virtues of our holy Mother. So exalted in the eyes of God she seeks only to appear little in the eyes of men, whilst we poor sinners desire to be considered and esteemed. Mary is ever so faithful in accomplishing whatever is pleasing to God whilst we perhaps are seeking for vain pretexts in order to shirk our duty.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary in this mystery gives us a wonderful example of generosity towards God. We rightly admire Abraham who was ready to immolate his only son. How much more admirable is the action of Mary offering her Son as a victim for the sins of the world. Never indeed was there a son more worthy of love than Jesus, and never was there a mother more loving than Mary. How terrible then was the sacrifice God demanded of her, and how wonderful the simple generosity with which she made it. Let us resolve to show ourselves worthy children of such a Mother. Let us imitate her generosity towards God in making, at least without murmur or complaint, such sacrifices as strict fidelity to our duty may involve.

CCCXXI. THE ANNUNCIATION (25th March).

The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David : and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her : Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her : Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son : and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High... And Mary said to the angel : How shall this be done, because I know not man ? And the angel answering said to her : The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee... And Mary said : Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it done to me according to thy word (Luke i. 26-38).

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your reverence and devotion for His holy Mother.

1ST POINT.—Consider with what deep respect the Angel salutes Mary. He sees in her God's Mother, the Queen of heaven and earth, and although accustomed to the beauty of the heavenly spirits, he is filled with admiration at the treasures of grace with which God has adorned the soul of that humble Virgin. He marvels at her union with God—a union so close and intimate as has never been granted to any pure creature, and of so transcendent a nature that no created intelligence can comprehend it. Pray God that you too may understand better the greatness and holiness of Mary, and that He may inspire you with a deep reverence towards her, especially when you approach her in prayer. Reflect on what a great favour it is to be allowed to converse with one so eminent in dignity, and to address her by the name of Mother. What a source of consolation and confidence it ought to be for you to have a Mother so closely united to God, and so powerful in her intercession on your behalf.

2ND POINT.—Consider with what deep humility Mary accepts this sublime dignity conferred upon her by God. Although she hears her praises uttered by an angel, yet she is troubled with fear. How we should endeavour to imitate her

in shunning the praise and esteem of men, which is fraught with danger for us who are not confirmed in humility as Mary was. Doubtless her heart overflowed with joy when she realised the wonderful dignity to which God had raised her ; her thoughts however were not held captive by any self-complacency, she at once directed them on her own nothingness and on the duties which this high dignity involved. Such should be our attitude towards our own vocation. Though little and poor, God has deigned to raise us to the sublime dignity of the priesthood to which so many graces are attached. We have certainly reasons for thanking God and rejoicing in the favours bestowed on us. Nevertheless we ought never to lose sight of our own nothingness, nor of the responsibilities we have assumed in accepting this lofty dignity. If it is our duty to live only for the glory of God, it is only by a thorough renunciation of self that we can secure this end. As Mary offered herself entirely to God so we also must say, "I am the servant of the Lord. Whatever He demands of me, with His help I will give Him."

CCCXXII. BEGINNING OF THE MONTH OF MAY

Represent to yourself the Blessed Virgin in heaven seated on her throne of glory and inviting you to consider her as your Mother, to have confidence in her love and all-powerful intercession.

Humbly pray Our Lord to excite in your heart a tender and true devotion to Mary.

1ST POINT.—Consider the greatness of Mary and the wonderful power given her by her Divine Son. The mightiest rulers in the world are only the servants of God. Even the angels of heaven serve God in all humility as their sovereign Lord. Mary however can call Jesus her Son and He, the supreme Ruler of creation, honours, esteems and loves her as only the most loving Son can love the best of mothers. It is in this extraordinary union with God that lies the greatness of Mary, and to comprehend fully this greatness, it would be necessary to comprehend the greatness of God Himself. Moreover, Jesus loving Mary as He does, has in His hands all the treasures of heaven to bestow on her. Who then shall be able to estimate the wealth of graces with which He has enriched

her, the beauty with which He has adorned her, the wonderful power of love with which He has inflamed her heart? He has given her every gift by which He could render her as worthy as possible of being His Mother. How we ought to honour so glorious and holy a Queen, to love such a loving and good Mother.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary deserves that we should put all our confidence in her. That men might honour her the more, her Divine Son has placed all His treasures at her disposal. If we are weighed down by the miseries of our soul, by the remembrance of our sins or by the violence of temptations, Mary the refuge of sinners is there to plead our cause, and to obtain for us the strength necessary to overcome our passions. She is the seat of wisdom and is most ready to impart to us that most sublime of all sciences, the knowledge of Jesus, the science of the saints. She is the comforter of the afflicted. If the cross weighs heavy on us we are sure to find in her motherly heart consolation and assistance to sanctify that cross. How then could we fail in confiding ourselves to the care of such a Mother at once so powerful and so good? Let us then resolve to go to her during this month for succour in all our needs, and at the same time to revere and to love her as children ought to love so worthy a Mother.

CCCXXIII. THE VISITATION (2nd July).

And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age : and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God... And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice and said : Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?... And Mary said : My soul doth magnify the Lord... And Mary abode with her about three months (Luke i. 36-56).

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a firm purpose of imitating the charity and humility of your holy Mother.

1ST POINT.—Consider the motives which impelled Mary to undertake this visit to Elizabeth. She was desirous to glorify God in making others share in the immense blessings she had received, and to bring Jesus to them. Again, she was eager to exercise those beautiful virtues of charity and humility always so dear to her, but still dearer to her now that she had become so closely united to God. Herein you can find room for imitating the virtues of your holy Mother when you have to pay visits. No desire of vain conversation should ever be your motive; the time of a priest is too precious for this, and it belongs to God. Your sole motives in undertaking visits should be to glorify God, to win souls for Him, to make Him better known and loved. In such visits many occasions will present themselves to you for the exercise of your charity and humility. Are you as equally ready to visit the poor as the rich? Reflect how pleasing to God is our attention to the poor.

2ND POINT.—Consider the joy of Elizabeth on receiving into her house the Mother of God. You too have frequent occasions for holding converse with Mary in prayer; and just as that holy intercourse brought down on Elizabeth the blessings of heaven, so will it become for you a source of like blessings. In imitation of Elizabeth avail yourself of intercourse with Mary, and your progress towards perfection will be ensured. Thank God sincerely for this favour He has vouchsafed you.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the household of Elizabeth was sanctified by this visit of Mary. Her modesty, her deep humility, her recollection of mind, her charity, her cheerful performance of the duties she happened to undertake must have made a deep impression on those good people and have drawn them nearer to God. Think on the efficacy for good which the example of a holy priest must exert who, in all his dealings with others, practises those virtues which he has learned at the school of his heavenly Mother. He too in truth brings Jesus and His blessings to those he visits.

CCCXXIV. FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL (16th July).

Remember the warning of Holy Scripture :—*Forsake not the law of thy mother (Prov. vi. 20).*

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your love and confidence towards Mary, and to help you to become her worthy child.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the devout wearing of the scapular is a special guarantee of Mary's protection. In doing so we publicly profess that we recognise her as our Mother and our Queen, we consecrate ourselves to her in a special manner, and are enrolled under her glorious banner by the prayers of the Church. How secure we ought to feel, knowing that we are placed under the guardianship of such a Mother. What great blessings and favours may we not expect from a Queen so powerful, so generous and so loving to those that belong to her.

2ND POINT.—Consider that the scapular continually reminds us to show ourselves worthy sons of our heavenly Mother. When any one bearing the insignia of his sovereign dares to commit a crime, he disgraces not only himself but also the sovereign whom he represents. Therefore, our aim should be to make our lives reflect the virtues of Mary—her modesty, her virginal purity, her horror of the smallest sin, her love for Jesus. Thus shall we honour our Mother whose badge we wear. If, on the other hand, we who profess to be her sons forget her example, we bring shame upon her.

3RD POINT.—Consider what spiritual advantages you can derive from the practice of this devotion of the scapular. Besides the special protection promised by Mary to those who devoutly wear the scapular, the Church implores special blessings for those who are enrolled, and has annexed numerous indulgences to the practice. Again, the scapular procures for us a share in the merits of a great religious Order that has given many saints to the Church, and even now numbers thousands of holy men and women leading lives of prayer and austere penance. Thus God shows His goodness in giving us such an easy access to so many favours. Let us be on our guard lest through negligence we forfeit such a precious treasure of grace.

CCCXXV. FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION (*15th Aug.*)

Recall the tradition that after the Ascension of her Divine Son, Mary still lived for several years, and that after her death Jesus did not allow the sacred body of His Mother to be given to the corruption of the tomb, but raising it again to life He took it to heaven by the ministry of angels.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may give you the grace to rejoice in the happiness and glory of your heavenly Mother, and to increase your devotion towards her.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a diligent use Mary made of the years she had still to pass on earth in promoting the glory of her Divine Son. She edified all by the beautiful example of her virtues ; she assisted the Apostles by her powerful prayers , to them as to the new christians with whom she lived she was a source of consolation and strength in their trials, and her wisdom was their guiding light. These functions she is still desirous to continue, and she can now fulfil them better even than when she was on earth. As she assisted the Apostles so also will she assist the priests of her Divine Son who seek her aid. She will be their guiding star in doubt or perplexity, their solace in time of trial.

2ND POINT.—Consider the happy death of Mary. Earth was to her a place of exile and though her will was perfectly conformed to the designs of God, she ardently desired to be united again to Jesus. Her life has been spent only for Him ; she has worked, suffered and devoted herself for Him ; she is now aware of the great reward Jesus has in store for her. Therefore, it was with a feeling of immense joy that she saw the moment approaching when her Divine Son would call her to Himself. Remember that the closer you follow the example of your heavenly Mother, the more will your death resemble in happiness the death of Mary. Hence, like her, detach your heart from this world, live for Jesus alone, devote yourself to His service, labour and suffer willingly for Him and for His interests.

3RD POINT.—Represent to yourself the glorious Assumption of Mary into heaven. Thousands of angels salute and welcome her as the Mother of their Lord and their own most beloved Queen. The saints gather round her and tender her their homage, gratitude and love. Jesus Himself advances to meet

His holy Mother who has loved Him so well and thanks her for all she has done and suffered for Him. God the Father crowns her as the Queen of angels and saints. Together with the whole heavenly court rejoice in the contemplation of the great glory and happiness bestowed upon that good Mother to whom you owe so much.

. CCCXXVI. FEAST OF THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

Represent to yourself your heavenly Mother inviting you to follow her example that you may share hereafter her happiness in heaven.

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with an ardent desire of imitating the purity of heart of the Blessed Virgin.

1ST POINT.—Consider that when God chose Mary to be the Mother of His Son, He willed that from the very dawn of her existence not even a shadow of evil should for a moment obscure the beauty of her soul. Highly indeed did Mary esteem that glorious purity, and carefully did she guard it. We are the sons of this most pure Mother. How could we deem ourselves worthy of her if we did not cultivate purity of heart in imitation of her excellent example? This we must do by endeavouring to atone for our past offences, by carefully avoiding any deliberate sin, and by destroying in our hearts any evil propensity that might become a source of new transgressions.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary's pure and sinless heart made her an object of predilection to God, for He saw reflected in her more perfectly than in any other creature, as in a spotless mirror, His own divine perfections. Reflect that the more closely you imitate your heavenly Mother the dearer you will become to God. Can there be anything more estimable, or is there anything we should desire more than that love of our God?

3RD POINT.—Consider how this eminent purity of Mary's heart won for her the choicest gifts of heaven, and thus caused her to advance with great strides in the path of perfection. God desires to grant us also a great abundance of graces; but our want of purity and the sinfulness of our hearts perpetually frustrate His generous designs. Let us firmly resolve to aim at the acquisition of a great purity of mind and heart.

CCOXXVII. THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN (*8th Sept.*)

Represent to yourself the angels and saints in heaven rejoicing in unison on the birthday of their holy Queen and Mother.

Humbly pray Our Lord to help you to grow in love and veneration for His most blessed Mother.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the birthday of Mary must have been a day of peculiar joy for the angels in heaven. Whatever brings new glory to God is for them a cause of joy. When they then beheld this little baby so pure, so holy, endowed with such wondrous gifts of grace ; when God made known to them that this child was to become the Mother of the Redeemer, and what glory He would reap from her own personal holiness, as well as from the thousands of souls she would lead on to perfection ; when they understood that this little child would alone give more glory to God than all the angels and saints ; great indeed must have been their exultation and delight. Try to conceive in yourself similar feelings of joy. Ask Mary that by her aid the holiness of your life and your zeal for souls may become for you also a cause of joy hereafter.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the whole world had reason to rejoice on the birthday of Mary. Through this little child many and great blessings were showered on mankind. Through her the world was to receive a Redeemer who would conquer sin, deliver men from the slavery of the devil, reconcile them with God, and open heaven to them. In this little child men would have a most excellent Mother to help them by her powerful intercession, to console and to protect them ; sinners would find in her a refuge and be brought back to the service of God. Reflect on what Mary has been and still is to you, and thank God for the happy day on which He gave you such a Mother.

3RD POINT.—Consider how this day must have been a day of consternation for hell. The devils must have been aware that this little child unstained by original sin was altogether outside their sway. They must have conjectured that this was the woman promised by God to mankind, who by her Son would crush the head of the infernal spirit. This very power that made the devils tremble before Mary is still hers, and she is ready to use it for those who invoke her protection.

CCCXXVIII. FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY (*Sept.*)

Represent to yourself Mary on her throne of glory in heaven surrounded by the heavenly court of angels and saints.

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your love and veneration for the Blessed Virgin and your confidence in her intercession.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the name of Mary reminds us of her greatness. The meaning of this name is Sovereign Lady. She is the Queen of heaven and earth. Her Divine Son in consequence of the love He bears her has placed all His treasures at her disposal. What she asks of Him He never refuses. He has raised her above all the angels and saints, so that all deem it an honour to execute her wishes, and all serve her with joy as their Queen and the Mother of the Son of God. Hence we too ought to venerate her whom God has made so great ; with what deep reverence ought we not to utter her holy name and to speak to her in prayer ?

2ND POINT.—The name of Mary, as it is the name of our Queen, is also the name of our Mother, and therefore it ought to bring before our minds all the love she has borne us and the affection with which she still cherishes us. She gave her son in sacrifice for us on the cross. With a bleeding but willing heart she united her sufferings to those of Jesus that we might be saved from eternal perdition. Besides, the benefits we have received from God through her hands are countless. Let us accustom ourselves to recall them each time we pronounce her holy name.

3RD POINT.—The name of Mary should evoke before our minds the virtues which shone forth resplendent in her life. What an admirable example she has set us—so pure, so humble, so obedient, so full of love towards God and charity towards men. Each time then we hear or pronounce her name our thoughts should revert to her incomparable virtues ; and if we imitate her in these, we shall become the worthy children of our great Mother.

CCCXXIX. FEAST OF THE SEVEN DOLOURS

(15th Sept.)

Imagine you behold Our Lady standing at the foot of the Cross.

Humbly pray Our Lord to increase your devotion towards Mary, and to help you to learn from her example how to sanctify your cross.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the heart of Mary as she stood beneath the cross must have been pierced with pangs of grief while she witnessed the excruciating torments of her Divine Son. Her thoughts went back to the cruel scenes of His agony and His trial amid the blasphemous taunts of His enemies. All now bore in on her in sight of this heart-piercing spectacle and rent her soul. Yet, this was only the crowning of a life of suffering ; this cruel passion that awaited Jesus had been long since present to her mind. Heavy indeed was the share that Jesus gave His Mother of His cross. Thus she attained her title of Queen of martyrs. She was dearer to Him than any creature, and it was precisely because He loved her so well that He united her so closely to His sufferings. Let us try to understand this, and then we shall understand better that each cross God sends us is a sign of His love. If we regard the cross in this light, we shall accept it with readiness.

2ND POINT.—Consider the fortitude with which Mary accepted her share in the sufferings of her Divine Son. She had accepted it at the moment of her reply to the Angel :—Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word. With the same fortitude she had offered her little child in the Temple as a Victim for the sins of the world, and had listened to the inspired words of Simeon foretelling the sufferings which awaited her. Never did she utter a word by way of opposition to the plans of God, however trying they might be for her. No utterance of complaint ever escaped her lips ; she accepted whatever she had to undergo in perfect peace and serenity. What a lesson for us, the children of so courageous a Mother. We are so easily disheartened and so quick to complain and to murmur at the slightest trial God sends us.

3RD POINT.—Consider whence Mary derived this admirable fortitude. From her great love for God and for the souls of men ; no sacrifice was too great for her love. Her living

faith again made her see in all her trials the loving hand of God. The fortitude of her Divine Son was constantly present to her mind. Finally she ceaselessly implored God in humble and fervent prayer for this grace. Let us seek for strength whence Mary sought for it, and we too shall find it.

CCCXXX. FEAST OF THE HOLY ROSARY (*7th Oct.*)

Represent to yourself the Blessed Virgin in heaven surrounded by the angels and saints who render respectful and loving homage.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with ~~the~~ great devotion to the holy Rosary.

1ST POINT.—Consider that when we say the rosary we are addressing the Queen of heaven and earth, the Mother of God. If we had to read an address to some distinguished person, should we not be ashamed to do it in a negligent and careless manner? How much deeper should be our shame when in our mode of addressing her in prayer, we fail to give her due respect whom the greatest rulers on earth must deem it an honour to serve. In saying the rosary we unite ourselves with the choirs of angels, and with the many devout persons who, with the deepest reverence and the most ardent love, proclaim the glories of Mary. Amid such a beautiful harmony of praise, who would dare to introduce a discordant note by tepidity or lack of respect? Let us resolve to recite our beads with attention, recalling to mind whom we are addressing.

2ND POINT.—Consider that the recitation of the rosary is an act of love towards the most holy and most loving of mothers. We bring before our mind the beautiful example of her life and virtues—in the scenes of the various mysteries—now her sufferings, now her glory in heaven. If feelings of tender gratitude are evoked within our hearts at the remembrance of an earthly mother's devotedness and self-sacrifice, if her happiness is a cause of joy and delight to her child, then surely the thought of our heavenly Mother should call forth more ardent sentiments of love and gratitude in our hearts; her claims on our love far exceed the claims of any earthly mother on the love of her child. The devout recitation of the rosary is therefore a most powerful means of fostering our love for Mary. Let us keep this thought in mind when we recite it.

3RD POINT.—Consider how pleasing it must be to Mary to see her children gathering around her to pay her the homage of their veneration, their confidence and their love; in consequence she must take pleasure in blessing them, in assisting them in their needs, in procuring for them the choicest favours from her Divine Son. Such reflections as these should stimulate us in the practice of the devotion of the rosary and make us perform it with all possible perfection.

CCOXXXI. FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LADY IN THE TEMPLE (*21st Nov.*)

Represent to yourself the Blessed Virgin, while yet a little child, in company with her parents, coming to the Temple of Jerusalem there to consecrate herself to God.

Humbly pray Our Lord that the example of Mary may excite in your heart a fervent desire of belonging entirely to Him and of devoting yourself to His service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the outcome of the supernatural wisdom with which God had illuminated the soul of Mary from her infancy. Even at that tender age she had perfectly realised that all the wealth, honours and pleasures offered by the world are nothing when compared with the possession of God—the source of all wisdom, all holiness, all peace and happiness. Hence, despising the allurements of the world she sets her whole heart on the Eternal Good. She has now only one object in life, to belong entirely to God and to possess Him in return. Resolve to engender a like wisdom in your soul and thus to follow her example.

2ND POINT.—Consider with what complete generosity Mary dedicated herself to God on that day. She loved her parents tenderly, and it cost her to be separated from them. She loved her humble home where under their affectionate care she had been so happy. All this she sacrificed for God, never swerving for a moment in the fidelity of her first purpose, to please God and to seek for nothing outside of Him. And thus she advanced daily in perfection. We too have consecrated ourselves to our Divine Master. Let us pray for the grace to imitate her in generosity to God's call, in her fidelity to her first resolve, and in the singleness of her aim, to please and to glorify God.

3RD POINT.—Consider what a bounteous reward Mary received in return for her generous oblation. Great and abundant graces were bestowed on her. And now in heaven, who can conceive the happiness, the glory, the power with which her Divine Son recompenses her for all that she had renounced for His sake? Let us too compare the fleeting enjoyments of this earth with the eternal joys of heaven, God's reward for those that are generous towards Him. Let us resolve then to make willingly the sacrifices God may demand of us; let us never refuse Him anything which we know would please Him and suffer all things rather than offend Him.

CCCCXXII. FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (*8th Dec.*)

Call to mind the dogma proclaimed by the Church concerning this most glorious privilege of Mary, *viz.*, that through the application of the future merits of her Divine Son she was preserved from the stain of original sin at the moment of her conception.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may strengthen you by His grace to remain always a true son of this most pure Mother.

1ST POINT.—Consider how God, when He chose Mary to become the Mother of His Son and thus destined her to be united with Him in a most excellent manner, willed and decreed that no sin should ever stain her soul. Reflect in how many ways the vocation to the priesthood resembles the sublime vocation of Mary and you will perceive, in consequence of the intimate relation between God and His minister, what an exquisite purity of heart is demanded of him. To acquire this purity should be the object of our most fervent prayer and generous efforts. We should earnestly endeavour to efface every stain of our past sins; we should constantly mortify our evil inclinations, and be ever watchful to avoid the slightest deliberate faults.

2ND POINT.—Consider how Mary herself highly esteemed this wonderful privilege she had received from God, and although she was confirmed in grace she took the greatest care to preserve in her heart that purity which rendered her so dear to God. I too have been purified by the Blood of Jesus Christ

on the day of my baptism, and if I have since then lost that baptismal innocence, it has been restored to me in the sacrament of penance. This state of sanctifying grace has made me an object of God's special love. Great should be my esteem for such a treasure and my care in preserving it. How diligently I should employ all the means God has given me to guard it. With far greater reason indeed should I do so, not being confirmed in grace as Mary, but hourly exposed to enemies intent on robbing me of this most precious treasure.

3RD POINT.—Consider the peculiar delight it brings to our Immaculate Mother to see her children imitating her purity. The more efforts they make to be like her, the more do they become objects of her loving care and protection. Ought not this motive alone to be an incentive in applying ourselves to the acquisition of this purity of heart which will be so fruitful in blessings for us.

CCCXXXIII. FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

Remember the words of this holy bishop :—If I were aware of any affection in my heart that is not according to God's will I would cut it off at once.

Humbly pray Our Lord to inflame your heart with the desire of imitating the virtues of which St. Francis set us such a beautiful example.

1ST POINT.—Consider how this great saint always kept in mind the presence of God. This thought was for him a most efficacious means of growing in sanctity. God's infinite majesty and holiness made so profound an impression on him that his whole exterior reflected the deep reverence with which his heart was penetrated. It became for him a continual warning and safeguard against the smallest faults ; it caused him to regulate perfectly his least actions ; it produced in him that vivid piety and that angelic modesty which struck all who came in contact with him. Have I not every reason to act as St. Francis did ? Wherever I am, whatever I do, am I not under the all-seeing eye of God's infinite majesty ? Were this thought of God's presence ever present to my mind I would avoid many faults and would be constantly spurred on to make greater efforts towards perfection.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Francis always placed himself and all his interests in the hands of God, desiring nothing but the accomplishment of God's holy will. That holy will was the guiding principle of all his actions, and no affection found room in his heart that was not in complete harmony with the good pleasure of his Creator. As for those circumstances of his life over which he had no control, in his own words, he reposed in God's Providence as a little child in the bosom of its mother. Hence, his unalterable peace under the severest trials, his undaunted courage in the greatest danger, his constancy in all his undertakings for God's glory. If we imitated this great example, anxieties would not so easily seize hold of us in the difficulties and trials that beset us, nor would we be so soon disheartened when things do not succeed according to our plans and wishes.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the high degree of sanctity to which St. Francis attained was due to his generosity in conquering himself. So perfectly had he overcome his own inclinations, so complete was the mastery he had acquired over himself that none of those with whom he lived could discover any inordinate movement in the least of his actions. Though naturally quick-tempered he had become a model of meekness and gentleness. How far we are still from this self-subjection ! Let us humbly and generously persevere in mortifying our passions, and we too shall conquer, for God will be with us.

CCCXXXIV. FEAST OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Represent to yourself St. Thomas at the foot of his crucifix praying fervently for light and strength.

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase in you the spirit of prayer and study.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Thomas preserved a wonderful innocence notwithstanding the dangers into which he was thrown. From his infancy he cherished a tender devotion to the most pure Mother of God. In earnest and fervent prayer he sought refuge against the assaults of the enemies of his soul and strength to conquer the most violent temptations. Born of a high family in which he could have enjoyed all the advantages and pleasures of the world, he fled from these dangers in order that he might secure his most precious treasure, innocence of soul. What a grand lesson for us who are so far

from possessing the holiness of this great saint. We too have passions to conquer, dangers to avoid ; we are in constant need of fervent prayer and of the protection of God and His holy Mother. Do we follow the example of St. Thomas in making use of the same means in order to preserve purity of heart ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the application of St. Thomas to study. God had endowed him with a master mind such as few have received. Nevertheless the admirable works he has left us, ranking him among the most illustrious Doctors of the Church, bear witness to the extensiveness of his reading, the depth of his meditations, and his assiduity in study. He knew the words of Scripture : “ The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge ” (Mal. ii. 7). He knew what a powerful means knowledge is for furthering God’s glory, what an indispensable weapon it is against evil, and therefore he applied himself to it with all the vigour his gifted mind allowed. Reflect on the motives for study that actuated the Angelic Doctor ; imitate his diligence in the study of the sacred sciences so necessary to fulfil the duties of our vocation.

3RD POINT —Consider St. Thomas’s assiduity in prayer. It was in prayer he sought light for his studies ; he himself acknowledges that it was at the foot of his crucifix that he found the solution of his difficulties. There too he sought for strength to do God’s work, and for the fruitful efficacy of his labours towards the advancement of God’s glory. We are in much greater need of God’s help than he was. Let us then resolve to seek for light and strength where he found it so abundantly.

CCCXXXV. FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH (*19th March*).

Imagine you are present with St. Joseph at his work in the house of Nazareth.

Humbly pray Our Lord to give you an ardent desire and a firm purpose of imitating St. Joseph in the use he made of the graces of God.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Joseph as head of the holy Family was called by God to a high degree of holiness, and in accordance with his sublime office had correspondingly received great graces. Although placed by Divine Providence in a lowly condition of life and without any opportunity of accomplishing

anything of significance in the eyes of the world, yet St. Joseph became a great saint. He faithfully responded to the sublimity of his call, and each grace he received brought forth fruits of holiness in his soul. God has likewise called us to an exalted state of life, the duties of which cannot be worthily fulfilled without our leading a truly holy life. In His infinite goodness God has granted and continues daily to grant us every grace we need in order to comply fully with all that He expects of us. Let us after the example of St. Joseph make diligent use of all those graces God so generously bestows on us. Let us try in particular to sanctify each of our daily actions. Great will be our reward if we do so, and irreparable the loss if we are careless.

2ND POINT.—Consider the great privileges with which God favoured St. Joseph. His whole life was passed in continual intercourse with Jesus and Mary. This was indeed a favour he highly esteemed; nay, all the treasures of this world were insignificant in his eyes and could have had no influence on his affections while he was in possession of Jesus and Mary. In them alone he sought all his happiness. To converse with them, to enjoy their presence, to work for them and under their eyes was for him a constant fount of heavenly joy and a most effective stimulant to perfection. This privilege of continual intercourse with Jesus and Mary granted to St. Joseph is in a high degree the privilege of every priest. Blessed is he who knows how to value it and to profit by it as St. Joseph did. Another privilege of St. Joseph was to have always before his eyes the wonderful example of holiness of Jesus and Mary, and to be able to listen to their words of heavenly wisdom. How carefully he treasured them in his heart, and how diligently he regulated his life in accordance with them. If we are men of prayer, similar favours shall be bestowed upon us, and gradually our lives shall become conformed to the example of Jesus and Mary, and to the words of wisdom which we shall hear from them in prayer. A third privilege of St. Joseph was that all his labours and his sufferings were in a special manner related to Jesus. They were all undertaken for His sake, and were thus rendered highly meritorious before God. In this thought he found an incentive to persevere courageously in his labours and sufferings. Such is also the privilege of a fervent priest. He can truly say: whatever I do, whatever I suffer, it is all for my Divine Master, my reward shall be an increase in His love. Will not this thought stimulate his courage in trial?

CCCXXXVI. SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH

Imagine you are present with St. Joseph at work in his little home of Nazareth.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may excite in you a fervent and practical desire of imitating St. Joseph.

1ST POINT.—Consider the eminent sanctity of St. Joseph. To be entrusted with the education of a king's children is deemed a high function conferred only on the most deserving. When therefore we see God Himself whose judgment cannot err selecting St. Joseph as the guardian of Jesus and His most pure Mother, we have a most clear evidence of the great holiness of St. Joseph. Moreover, in the Gospel the Holy Spirit pronounces him to be a just man. He whom the Sovereign Lord of all honours thus must be deserving of our extreme veneration ; and in this, we have the example of Jesus and Mary to imitate.

2ND POINT.—Consider with what love, diligence, constancy and prudence St. Joseph fulfilled the charge entrusted to him. No labour was too great, no trial too severe to be undergone on behalf of those whom he was appointed to protect. Forgetful of his own needs he devoted himself entirely to their welfare. As priests we too have in a certain way been constituted the guardians of Jesus in our own hearts, and in the hearts of those confided to our care. If, like Joseph, we discharge our high functions with diligence, love and fidelity, God will bestow on us His choicest blessings.

3RD POINT.—Consider how the saints in heaven sometimes reap as part of their reward great power to continue the good work they have so zealously performed on earth. How true it is in the case of St. Joseph. He is still the guardian and foster-father of Jesus in the hearts of his clients. Those who desire to preserve Jesus in their hearts and to live with His life, should not neglect to have recourse to St. Joseph's powerful intercession. Reflect on the necessity of this for a priest who must guard the life of grace in his own soul, and in the souls of those committed to his charge. Resolve to cherish a true and fervent devotion to St. Joseph.

CCCXXXVII. FEAST OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST
DE LA SALLE (*15th May*).

Represent to yourself St John de la Salle in the midst of little children, teaching them.

Humbly pray Our Lord to give you a true desire of imitating the virtues of this great saint.

1ST POINT.—Consider the ardent zeal of St. John for the souls of children of the poor. Born of a noble family and endowed with uncommon talents which might have induced him to aspire to lofty ecclesiastical dignities, St. John abandoned his rich inheritance and renounced all preferments, in order that he might consecrate himself to the instruction and christian education of children, especially those of the poor. He saw that their immortal souls cost Jesus Christ His precious Blood. The dangers that threatened their faith and morals from want of religious instruction struck his heart with sorrow, and in the hope of developing them into good christians he became fired with zeal—a zeal that promoted him to face with courage the greatest sacrifices. Reflect on these motives ; they are no less true to-day than they were then, and should inspire you too with an ardent and constant zeal for the instruction of children.

2ND POINT.—Consider the patience and constancy of St. John in carrying out his enterprise. Great indeed were the obstacles that opposed him, the humiliations and contradictions he had to undergo, the persecutions he had to endure even from those who should have been his protectors. But neither the lack of money, nor the defection of some of his disciples, nor the unjust vexations of those above him could make him falter in the work he had undertaken for God's glory. His love for God and his childlike trust in Divine Providence kept up his courage in all adversity. If we are zealous in promoting God's glory we shall certainly encounter many difficulties, failures, criticisms and humiliations ; it is at such times that our love of God and our confidence in Him are put to the test.

3RD POINT.—Consider the means St. John made use of to bring his enterprise to a successful issue. His holy and mortified life by which he attracted men's hearts to God, his fervent and humble prayers which gained for him God's all-powerful assistance, his purity of intention by which he directed all

things to God's glory alone, abandoning their issue into His hands : such were the means he employed, and in doing so he merely followed the example of other saints. They all achieved great things for God because they had recourse to these means. Let us try to imitate them.

CCCXXXVIII. FEAST OF ST. ALOYSIUS (*21st June*).

Represent to yourself St. Aloysius at the foot of the altar, absorbed in prayer.

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a firm purpose of imitating this great saint.

1ST POINT.—St. Aloysius was an angel of purity. At the court of Spain, in the midst of worldly pleasures, with all the means at his disposal for the enjoyment of those pleasures, he kept intact his baptismal innocence. With no less care did he continue afterwards to preserve his heart pure, so that to the time of his death no stain of the slightest deliberate venial sin had sullied the beauty of his soul. What an object of love his soul must have been to God and His angels. What a happiness to be thus pure of heart—so fruitful a source of divine favours. Let us remember however that this eminent purity was not obtained by St. Aloysius without the most generous efforts on his part. He kept a rigorous guard over his eyes ; his thoughts and affections he kept in strict control ; he mortified his body with great severity. If we desire to resemble this great saint, let us resolve to use the means he used.

2ND POINT.—St. Aloysius was like an angel in his perfect detachment from all the things of this world. It lay in his power to enjoy to the utmost all the world can give—riches, glory, a great name, the pleasures that accompany riches : all this failed to attract or influence him. He was as desirous of ridding himself of all these worldly advantages as others are of possessing them. His heart was in heaven ; God had taken possession of it. His supreme joy, like that of the angels, was to love God and to be loved by Him ; his only ambition to please God. Hence, he eagerly availed himself of every occasion of proving his love. We acknowledge that he has been wise in his choice. Why then do we not make more strenuous efforts to walk in his footsteps ?

3RD POINT.—St. Aloysius was an angel of piety and union with God. Like the angels who watch over men and yet never lose sight of God, so neither could the mind or heart of Aloysius be ever distracted from God by mere earthly things. How fervently he prayed. How lovingly and carefully he performed his spiritual exercises. Creatures instead of tending to turn his mind away from God served only to remind him of the goodness, the greatness and the wisdom of God. Happy the priest who is thus united with God—the source of all wisdom, strength and holiness. Not without strenuous efforts did St. Aloysius attain to this wonderful piety and union with God, nor can we hope to attain to any degree of it otherwise.

CCOXXXIX. FEAST OF ST. PETER (29th June).

Imagine you are present at the scene where St. Peter is professing his faith in the divinity of Our Lord :—*Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matt. xvi. 16).*

Humbly pray that Our Lord may excite in your heart a living faith and an ardent love towards Himself.

1ST POINT.—St. Peter is for us a model of living faith. It rules all his actions ; it makes him renounce all to follow Jesus ; at his Master's word he walks on the water ; he is the first to profess openly his faith in the divinity of Jesus. After the discourse in which Our Lord made promise of the Holy Eucharist when "many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him," St. Peter's faith remains unshaken and he says to his Divine Master : "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Later on it was his faith that made him brave all dangers, surmount all difficulties, undergo with joy a cruel death. We too have received this most precious gift of faith ; through it we are made to participate in a certain way in the wisdom of God. Let this gift therefore become for us the principle of our spiritual life and the guide of all our actions. In its light we should view all things, and in it find the strength to overcome our enemies.

2ND POINT.—St. Peter is a model of true repentance. Although he had received from his Master so many proofs of the fullest pardon, he never ceased throughout his remaining years of life to deplore the fault he had committed. Its remembrance

was for him a constant motive of the deepest humility. With a thankful heart he accepted all hardships and sufferings and death itself as a means of atoning for the grief he had caused his Divine Master. As we too have offended God, so should we imitate the true repentance of St. Peter.

3RD POINT.—St. Peter is our model of genuine love of Jesus. Reflect on all he did and suffered for his Master's cause—the long and perilous journeys he undertook to make Jesus known and loved, the hardships and imprisonments he endured, his rejoicing at being scourged and accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus, and finally his glorious martyrdom. Our Lord aware of our weakness does not demand so much from us. What He does demand from us are the sacrifices involved in the generous fulfilment of our daily duties, in the mortification of our senses, in the patient endurance of our trials, and in our labours for His glory. Do we make any efforts to give Him these proofs of our love?

CCOXL. FEAST OF ST. PAUL

Represent to yourself St. Paul going to his martyrdom.

Humbly ask Our Lord to excite in your heart a firm purpose of spending yourself for the salvation of souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Paul spent himself for the glory of his Divine Master. No sacrifice was too great for him : once he was stoned and left for dead ; three times he was scourged, three times shipwrecked ; his life was often in danger ;—but neither fatigue nor perils nor persecutions could quench his ardent zeal. However great his trials, if they tended to make Jesus better known and loved by men, they were for him a cause of joy rather than a check upon his zeal. When we reflect on all that Our Lord has done for us, should we not feel ourselves spurred on like St. Paul to spend ourselves entirely in His holy service ? How defective in true love we often show ourselves when through fear of labour or humiliation or suffering we shirk our duties.

2ND POINT.—Consider the great example of humility set us by St. Paul. Though engaged in such great enterprises for God, though endowed with the gift of miracles and admired by

all his christians for his wisdom and holiness, though God raised him in spirit to the third heaven and revealed to him things not granted to man to utter ; yet St. Paul always remained deeply humble, rendering all glory to God and deeming himself only worthy of the contempt of all. We who are so little advanced in holiness and have done so little for God, often appropriate to ourselves the glory that belongs to God, and seek for the esteem and praise of men. Let us learn true humility from the great Apostle.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Paul though so humble was not afraid to undertake the most difficult enterprises ; in God he placed all his confidence. The work he was sent to accomplish, the conversion of the Roman and Greek world, so terribly corrupted and so proud, was beyond all human strength. But St. Paul's governing principle was : I am nothing of myself, but I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me. Let us learn from this that humility is not pusillanimity ; when genuine, it is accompanied with entire confidence in God, who never fails those that humbly trust in Him.

CCCXLI. FEAST OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

(*19th July*).

Represent to yourself St. Vincent in the midst of the poor, helping and consoling them.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may teach you to imitate the virtues of St. Vincent.

1ST POINT.—Consider the wonderful charity of St. Vincent. The words of Our Lord :—Whatever you do to the least of mine you do it also to Me—were deeply imprinted in his heart. His charity therefore went out to all that were destitute or in suffering. The sick, the blind, the poor, little children, the ignorant, prisoners and slaves ; all found him at their side relieving their necessities, helping and consoling them as he would have done to Jesus Himself whom he saw in each of them. And not satisfied with this he instilled the charity of his own heart into the hearts of others, thus multiplying the works of charity wherever he went. What a beautiful sight it was in the eyes of God and His angels. Are your views and

feelings towards the poor, the sick and the ignorant, like those of St. Vincent? Do you also see Jesus in them, and for His sake do you love and help them as much as you can? Are you not at times impatient or even harsh towards them in your judgments, your words and actions, not treating them as you would treat Our Lord? Recall the words of Our Lord:—As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me.

2ND POINT.—Consider how by this inexhaustible charity St. Vincent drew innumerable souls to God—among the poor he so lovingly helped, and among the rich whom he associated in his good works and inflamed with his own zeal. Remember that for us priests, charity is the great means of attracting souls to their Heavenly Father, whose mercy and goodness shine forth in us by the practice of this virtue. On the other hand the want of charity, of patience and of self-denial often repels souls from-giving their hearts to God.

3RD POINT.—Consider the deep humility of St. Vincent. His works of charity up to the present day arouse the admiration even of the enemies of the Church. All men esteemed him; he was the counsellor of kings; he was in close relation with the highest nobility from whom he obtained large sums of money for the poor. Nevertheless this wide influence did not alter the humble opinion he entertained of himself; he deemed himself an unworthy instrument in the hands of God. One of his friends says of him: “As ambitious people eagerly crave for honours, as eagerly did St. Vincent crave to be despised by all, and he considered the esteem with which he was surrounded as a punishment of his sins.” Compare your works with his, your humility with his, and form some practical resolutions.

CCCXLII. FEAST OF ST. IGNATIUS (*31st July*).

Imagine you see St. Ignatius inviting you to follow his example in devoting yourself generously to the service of God.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may strengthen your purpose of applying yourself courageously to perfection.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Ignatius when he was lying wounded in his brother's castle, on reading the life of Our Lord and some lives of saints, began to reflect how infinitely

more deserving Our Lord is of a whole-hearted service than any king of this world, however noble and generous. He perceived the true wisdom of the saints in faithfully devoting their lives to God's service; they now possess a reward far superior to any favour an earthly king can bestow on those that serve him. These reflections aroused within the heart of Ignatius an ardent desire of imitating the saints. Addressing himself he said: "What even women and children have been able to do with the help of God, why should I not be able to do?" Let us dwell on the truth and wisdom of these conclusions reached by St. Ignatius. Ask God to help you to make them fructify in practice.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Ignatius was not satisfied with vain wishes; they soon developed into a determined purpose, and the purpose into action. As he had been a loyal and devoted servant of his earthly Sovereign, so did he now become the loyal and devoted servant of his heavenly King. No delay, no half measures; the promptings of his generous heart found an adequate response only in the thorough oblation of himself to Christ, and thus in a short time he ascended to the sublimest heights of sanctity. Why is it that we advance so little or perhaps make no progress whatever? In all probability because we remain satisfied with vain wishes or half-hearted efforts, or keep ever postponing a sincere and earnest renovation.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Ignatius became a saint by the complete conquest he gained over himself. Hitherto, he had been a worldly man, ambitious for the honours, wealth and enjoyments of this life; once he had given his heart to God, instead of honours he courted humiliations of every kind; instead of wealth he embraced the hardships of poverty, renouncing all his possessions; instead of worldly enjoyments he chose a life of austere self-denial. "Conquer self," was the favourite axiom of his spirituality. How true to the words of the Imitation. "The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress wilt thou make." May the generous example of St. Ignatius encourage us to put these words into practice.

CCOXLIII. FEAST OF ST. ALPHONSUS DE
LIGUORI (*2nd Aug.*)

Represent to yourself this great saint gathering the poor around him in order to instruct them in the ways of salvation.

Humbly pray Our Lord to inspire you with a fervent zeal for souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a grand example of zeal for souls St. Alphonsus gives us. He was a man of high rank and endowed with exceptional talents. At the age of sixteen he was already doctor in civil and canon law, and might have aspired to the highest positions in the kingdom. When he looked around and saw so many of the poor steeped in ignorance and vice, his thoughts were directed towards their spiritual welfare. He saw in those souls the image of God defaced, the blood of Jesus Christ shed for them in vain, and was at once inspired with an ardent zeal to bring them back to God. Notwithstanding the opposition of his father he abandoned all his worldly prospects, and becoming a priest he devoted his life's labours to those stricken with abject poverty. He sought out labourers working in the fields, took part with them in their toil, and thus won them over to listen to his words on God and on the salvation of their souls. You should also reflect on the number of souls perishing all around and on their incomparable value in the eyes of God. Many of them depend on your zeal for their salvation. This thought should inspire you with a strong determination of spending yourself on their behalf.

2ND POINT.—Consider how this great zeal for souls made St. Alphonsus take a vow, never to lose a moment of time. He had realised that every moment of time was an occasion of glorifying God, of saving the souls of others, and of sanctifying his own. Therefore he valued time as a miser values gold, and faithfully kept his difficult vow till his death at the age of ninety-two. Reflect on how precious is the time of a priest; how much good work he can do, if he makes good use of it, and what evil consequences will ensue for himself and for others, if he squanders it. What a responsibility before God!

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Alphonsus found a continual stimulant for his zeal and abundant blessings of God on his labours, in his tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and

to the Mother of God. However great be our activity or our talents, we can do nothing without God's all-powerful help. Let us resolve to imitate St. Alphonsus in seeking that help in the Sacred Heart of our Divine Master and in the intercession of Mary. Hence foster in your heart a tender devotion towards them.

CCOXLIV. FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS

(13th August).

Represent to yourself St. John Berchmans on his death-bed, holding in his hands his crucifix, his rosary and his book of rules, and saying :—With these three I am happy to die.

Humbly pray Our Lord to excite in your heart a firm purpose of imitating St. John Berchmans so that you too may have a happy death.

1ST POINT: Consider why the crucifix was for St. John a source of consolation and joy. It was because he had been a true disciple of Jesus Crucified ; he had done what he could to return Him love for love ; he had diligently corresponded with the graces he received and which cost Our Lord so much. And now remembering the promises of his Divine Master he could firmly hope to be received with love into the joys of eternal life. We likewise at the hour of our death shall find in the crucifix a source of consolation and joy, if now after the example of this holy youth we follow Jesus Crucified, mortifying our evil inclinations and taking up lovingly for His sake our daily cross.

2ND POINT.—Another source of joy for St. John at the hour of death was the sight of his rosary. How often he had said with tender devotion this beautiful prayer, paying homage to his Queen and Mother, proclaiming her praises, invoking her assistance, and recalling to mind her virtues, her sorrows and her glory. He had generously tried to show himself a true child of his heavenly Mother by his modesty, his purity and his love for Our Lord ; and he knew that at the hour of death Mary never fails her faithful servants who may rely on her for help and consolation in their passage into eternity. If we desire to secure this happiness for ourselves, we have but to follow the path trodden by St. John Berchmans.

3RD POINT.—The book of Rules represented to St. John the expression of God's holy will. Throughout his life he had endeavoured to fulfil this holy will in all things even in the smallest details. Happy also shall we be, if we are children of obedience, seeking first and before all things the fulfilment of God's will no matter what it may cost us.

CCCXLV. FEAST OF ST. BERNARD (*20th August*).

Represent to yourself St. Bernard encouraging you to follow his example and thus to win for yourself the eternal crown.

Humbly pray that by the example of St. Bernard our Lord may excite in you a great generosity in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the example of humility set us by St. Bernard. He was a man of illustrious family ; his learning, his eloquence, the holiness of his life had spread his fame throughout christendom. He was the friend and esteemed adviser of kings, bishops and successive popes. Great were his labours for God ; so beautiful were the books he wrote that they won for him the title of Doctor of the Church. He gained over innumerable souls to God, and others he led on to sanctity. God even manifested the holiness of His servant by many miracles. Nevertheless, though he had the honour and praise of all, he held himself in contempt and tried to render himself abject before all. What an example this saint's life ought to be for us. What boast can we make of birth, learning, eloquence or holiness ? Hitherto, what have been our achievements for God ? and yet we regard ourselves with esteem. The smallest humiliation causes us either anger or unhappiness. Let us try to penetrate into the reasons that made St. Bernard so humble, and apply them to ourselves.

2ND POINT.—St. Bernard has left us a beautiful example of the mortification of our senses. He was living in the midst of the world as one entirely dead to it. Although always surrounded by crowds eager to hear or to interview him, and at times obliged to undertake long journeys, or to reside amid the splendour of royal or the papal courts, yet he was so recollected and had acquired such control over his senses that he seemed to use them only for God. Such little attention did he pay to food that he scarcely noticed the quality of the food he ate ; he

passed through beautiful scenes of nature without raising his eyes to observe them ; in the midst of thronging multitudes he remained so perfectly united to God that he appeared to move in this world rather as an angel than as a man. It was this complete mastery of his senses that raised St. Bernard to such a high degree of sanctity ; he now possesses the eternal reward due to his generous efforts to conquer himself. Let these thoughts stir you up to be more earnest in watching over your senses and affections. —

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Bernard's example exerted such a strong influence over his brothers and sister and a great number of other persons that they abandoned the world and gave themselves up to a life of perfection. Such is the effect of sanctity in inflaming men's hearts with the love of God. We should therefore strive generously towards perfection ; for the efficacy of our labours in winning souls to God will be proportionate to the efforts we expend on our own sanctification.

CCCXLVI. FEAST OF ST. PETER CLAVER

(9th September).

Represent to yourself St. Peter in the midst of the poor negro slaves, helping, consoling and assisting them.

Humbly pray Our Lord that the example of St. Peter Claver may excite in your heart a great zeal for the salvation of souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Peter Claver prepared himself for his apostolate. He had been foretold by St. Alphonsus Rodriguez the great things that God expected of him, and the great reward he would reap for his labours. The words of the aged saint inflamed the heart of Peter Claver. Aware of the truth of Our Lord's words :—Without Me you can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John xv. 4), he set himself with earnestness to the task of his own sanctification. We are likewise called to do God's work. If we wish it to succeed, we must with God's grace first render ourselves fit instruments in His hands by the sanctity of our lives. Without God we can achieve no sterling results. Let us then resolve to correct our defects, to purify more and more our hearts, to acquire especially those virtues that mark the true apostle—humility, patience, charity and union with God.

2ND POINT.—Consider the example of self-denial given us by St. Peter Claver. In order to gain souls to God he made himself the slave of slaves, spending forty years in their service with indefatigable charity. Neither the repulsive squalor of their surroundings,—often the holds of ships—nor the stench arising from their diseases or want of cleanliness, nor the difficulties of instructing them in various languages could deter him from serving and attending to them with the most tender love, charity and patience. In like manner I must also learn to love the poor, the ignorant and sinners. As St. Peter Claver had to overcome his natural repugnances, so shall it be incumbent on me if I wish to bring back to God those souls that are so dear to Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider the spirit of mortification of St. Peter Claver. His life was one of unmitigated hardships. To achieve what he did, he had to forget himself entirely, regardless of fatigue or danger, repugnance or ingratitude. And not satisfied with this he imposed on himself the most severe mortifications, in order to atone for the sins of these poor outcasts of society, and to win for them the grace of conversion. How insignificant are the hardships and sufferings I may have to endure when compared with those of St. Peter Claver. And yet with what reluctance and impatience I often undergo them. Where is that spirit of mortification which should make me endure without complaint the defects and ingratitude of those committed to my charge? Where are the crosses I offer to God for the salvation of souls? Let the example of St. Peter stimulate me to be more generous in the future.

CCCXLVII. FEAST OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS

For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways (Psalm xc. ii).

Humbly ask Our Lord to increase your devotion to your Guardian Angel.

1ST POINT.—Consider the reverence we owe our Guardian Angel and the Guardian Angels of others. These Angels are the princes of the heavenly court. They are always in God's

presence and see Him face to face. Wonderful is their purity and holiness, and their intelligence, wisdom and power surpass our concept. If then a sense of reverence restrains us from any unbecoming word or action in presence of persons of dignity, should it not effect a still greater restraint on us in presence of that Angel who is always with us? The remembrance of the presence of our Guardian Angel will make us refrain from uncharitable speech, and from any action that might cause scandal to our neighbour. He too has an Angel zealously watching over him.

2ND POINT.—Consider how we owe our Guardian Angel great love in return for the love he bears us. Knowing that our souls are very dear to God and that they have been ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our Angels guard them with the tenderest care night and day. Should we not set a high value on this friendship of our Angel? Love claims a return of love. Resolve frequently to salute and to thank him, so that you may cultivate his friendship and always enjoy his guiding light.

3RD POINT.—Our Guardian Angel should inspire us with great confidence in his protection. When we recall with what a pure and disinterested love he cherishes us, and with what fidelity he discharges this office to which God has appointed him, surely we have reason to place our greatest trust in him and often to implore his assistance. He is constantly interceding with God on our behalf, and his powerful intercession must have often warded off dangers from us in the past. Thus in our work for the salvation of souls we should ask the Guardian Angels of those souls for whom we are actually working to co-operate with us in our efforts to lead them to God.

CCCXLVIII. FEAST OF ST. FRANCOIS BORGIA

(10th October).

Represent to yourself St. Francis Borgia inviting you to imitate his example so that you may obtain a reward like his.

Humbly ask Our Lord to inspire you with a great generosity in His holy service.

1ST POINT.—Consider the detachment of St. Francis Borgia from all the goods and pleasures of this world. Duke of Gandia, viceroy of Catalonia, closely related to the King of Spain, he possessed all the honours, wealth and fame that men of the world commonly ambition. All this he renounced in order that he might love God better and be loved by Him. In doing so, was he not adopting the wisest course? If he had retained those worldly advantages and attached his heart to them, what would remain of them now? By abandoning them, what a glorious crown he has secured for himself, and one of which he will never be deprived. As I acknowledge the wisdom of his choice, so to be consistent in practice I should not allow any attachment to the goods of this world to check my progress in the way of perfection.

2ND POINT.—Consider the high esteem which St. Francis Borgia had for the virtue of obedience. As ruler of his duchy and viceroy of Catalonia, he had numbers subject to his will, ready to execute his orders. Instead of this sway, he preferred to follow in the footsteps of his Divine Master by a life of perfect obedience in the Society of Jesus, founded a little earlier by St. Ignatius. For him, obedience marked the safest path to heaven since it points out always and unerringly the will of God. Such is the teaching of faith. A principle then which we accept on infallible grounds should be resolved into the practice of our daily lives. What opposes us is our attachment to our self-will, to our independence and to our freedom in adopting our own personal views. Shall we permit any such attachments to deprive us of the great reward accompanying the practice of this beautiful virtue?

3RD POINT.—St. Francis Borgia sets us the example of a life of prayer and mortification. Many were the hours he spent both by day and by night, prostrate before God in fervent prayer. Thus he obtained from God those graces that raised him to such a high degree of sanctity, and those abundant blessings that made his work so fruitful for God's glory. So intense had become his spirit of mortification that St. Ignatius had to restrain him in his ardour for suffering. If this great saint, who while yet living in the world led an exceptionally holy life, thought prayer and mortification so necessary for the perfection of his religious life, can I deem these virtues less necessary for me in my present state? Without them I can never hope to attain the perfect mastery over my passions.

CCCXLIX. FEAST OF ST. TERESA (15th Oct)

My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John iii. 18).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may excite in your heart a true and generous love for Him.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Teresa gave God a proof of her love by her hatred of sin. Although her life had been always innocent, yet she bitterly grieved for the faults she had committed because she saw in them great ingratitude towards God's infinite goodness. Notwithstanding her failing health, this sorrow and repentance urged her on to practise the severest penances and to humble herself before all for having loved too little Him who is worthy of all love. This hatred of sin made her shun the least imperfections by which the fervour of God's love might be diminished in her heart. We have offended God more grievously than St. Teresa ; His love ought to inspire us with a true spirit of penance and humility, and at least to make us accept patiently our trials and sufferings in atonement for our past offences. If our love of God is sincere, we shall zealously guard the purity of our heart so as never deliberately to offend Him.

2ND POINT.—St. Teresa showed her great love for Our Lord by her earnest endeavours to please and glorify Him in practising those virtues of which He has set us the example. The least increase she could acquire in God's love was more valuable in her eyes than all the treasures of the world. No desire for the esteem and affection of those around her had any influence on her. The desire of pleasing those we love is a natural tendency of our heart. Does this tendency operate on us in our love of God ?

3RD POINT.—The greater love we have for a person the more do we take his interests to heart. St. Teresa exemplifies this axiom in her love for God. How she bewailed the sins of mankind, and what efforts she put forth to make reparation for them by her penances and good works. She fervently offered her prayers and her sufferings for the conversion of sinners. She laboured strenuously in order to make God better known and loved. Surely, God has a right to expect this proof of love from His priests who are specially consecrated to promote His interests.

CCCL. FEAST OF ST. ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

(30th October).

Represent to yourself St. Alphonsus Rodriguez on his deathbed, yielding up his soul to God in perfect peace and happiness.

Humbly pray Our Lord that by the example of St. Alphonsus you may learn how to sanctify more and more your daily actions.

1ST POINT.—Consider how the life of this great saint was one of continual and rapid progress in the way of perfection till the day of his death at the age of eighty-six years. The secret of his eminent sanctity lay not in works of zeal for God's glory that win the admiration of men, but in the perfect performance of his daily duties. He was employed in the office of door-keeper in the college of Majorca, and in this humble duty he found means of practising to an heroic degree those virtues that made him so dear to God—obedience, humility, patience, mortification of his senses, piety towards Our Lord and His holy Mother. From such an example we may derive the conviction that a true desire of advancing in perfection implies no extraordinary actions, but merely the perfect discharge of our daily duties. Each of them will supply us with innumerable occasions for the practice of some particular virtue, and will become for us a mine of the richest merit, provided we are diligent.

2ND POINT.—Consider how one of the means St. Alphonsus made use of to arrive at that perfection was an eminent spirit of prayer. It was from his continual intercourse with Jesus and Mary that he learned the science of the saints, and the art of transforming the most insignificant duties of his humble office into means of progress. It was by prayer that he maintained that steadfast purpose, in spite of the severest trials, of denying and overcoming himself. In like manner, must we seek the light and strength we are in need of in humble and fervent prayer, so that by our holiness we may become more worthy of our vocation.

3RD POINT.—Another means which aided St. Alphonsus to become so great a saint was his remembrance of the presence of God. Questioned on the subject by his superior he could say,

that in a whole day the time his thoughts and affections were not fixed on God would not amount to more than is required to recite the Apostles' Creed. This continual and loving remembrance of God's presence wrought in him an angelical modesty, a deep reverence in prayer, and a constant watchfulness lest anything displeasing to God might creep into his actions. Another effect of this practice was that, notwithstanding the extraordinary favours he received from God, considering himself in the light of God's infinite holiness he was always filled with the deepest sentiments of humility and self contempt.

CCCLI. ALL SAINTS DAY (*1st November*).

Represent to yourself the heavenly mansions and the innumerable saints surrounding God's throne who invite you to follow in their footsteps.

Humbly pray that Our Lord may inspire you with a firm purpose of serving Him with great fervour and generosity.

1ST POINT.—The thought of heaven ought to fill our hearts with joy. Think what a beautiful place the palace of the King of kings must be, since this world where He allows His enemies to dwell is so beautiful. Where joy reigns without a shadow of sorrow must be indeed an abode of delight. There each one's happiness is increased by the happiness of all around him; all are holy, beautiful and full of love for one another. They dwell in the society of Jesus and Mary and behold God's infinite perfection and possess Him for ever. This region of eternal and boundless happiness is the abode of our Father whither we shall be called after a short time, if we remain faithful.

2ND POINT.—The thought of heaven ought to stimulate our generosity in God's service. How happy the saints now are for all they have done for God. If they could come back into this world, they would do still more. They had the same human nature, with the same passions to conquer and temptations to overcome as we. With God's help they have struggled and succeeded in reaching their goal of eternal bliss. They invite us to follow in their footsteps, and tell us to be brave and generous, to struggle with constancy for a brief while, and then when the victory is achieved to join their company for ever.

3RD POINT.—The thought of heaven ought to be for us a great encouragement and consolation amid the trials of this life. Quickly they will end, and, if we have carried our cross with courage, supported with patience our sufferings, hardships, temptations and anxieties, and generously made out of love for God those sacrifices our duty claimed, at the close of our life we shall pass from these sorrows into never-ending bliss. Then our crosses, our sufferings and our efforts to conquer ourselves will become for us an additional source of endless joy.

CCCLII. ALL SOULS DAY (*2nd November*).

Represent to yourself purgatory with countless souls being purified there by the most intense sufferings.

Humbly pray God to excite in you a firm purpose of purifying your own soul, and of helping by your prayers those suffering souls.

1ST POINT.—Consider what a great lesson we can learn from the souls in purgatory. How intensely they now suffer for those sins they so lightly and so frequently committed—sins of uncharitableness, disrespect in prayer, untruthfulness and other sins they took so little care to avoid, and of which they so imperfectly repented in their confessions. If they could begin again, what care and diligence they would show in correcting themselves, what generosity of purpose in avoiding the least deliberate venial sin. Lest you should have one day to harbour like futile regrets, learn from their sad condition to do now what you should wish to have done when you shall have to appear before the judgment seat of God. Those poor souls are afflicted now because they failed to pay God the debt of temporal punishment due for their forgiven sins. They had frequent occasions of doing so when tried by crosses and humiliations, but failed to utilise them. By gaining indulgences, practising works of penance and serving God with greater fervour they might have cleared all their debts. These means of remission granted them by God they passed over with neglect, and now they have to satisfy God's justice before they can enter heaven. Let us take advantage of what they regret to have neglected.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a grand work of mercy it is to help those suffering souls. They are very dear to God. Nevertheless His justice and holiness prevent His admitting them into heaven, as they are still tarnished with the remnants of sin. His mercy however places in our hands the means of satisfying His justice through the satisfactions of Jesus Christ. We can understand from this how much God desires us to help His suffering children, and how pleasing to Him is our charity towards them. If the works of mercy by which we relieve the sufferings of our neighbour here on earth are so agreeable to God, how much more the relief we bring by our prayers and satisfactions to those souls whose sufferings are so great. Reflect on the gratitude they will bear towards those who shorten their period of expiation. Those souls in turn will pray for those to whom they owed their release. Ought we not then to undertake with zeal this beautiful work of mercy at once so pleasing to God and so advantageous to ourselves ?

CCCLIII. FEAST OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO

(4th November).

Represent to yourself St. Charles in the midst of the plague-stricken, ministering with great charity to both their spiritual and temporal needs. Humbly pray that Our Lord may excite in your heart a great charity towards the poor, and a fervent spirit of prayer and mortification.

1ST POINT.—Consider the great charity of St. Charles that caused him to distribute all he had to the poor. He lived in a time of the greatest misery, owing to the plague that was devastating the whole of Italy, and in particular his episcopal town of Milan. In one day he distributed forty thousand ducats of gold, and a little later twenty thousand more ; he sold all his furniture, even his bed, to come to the rescue of his people. Nor did he spare his own person ; when all who could fled from the infected town, where the plague was raging to such an extent that the dead bodies were being carried away by cart-loads, he remained in the midst of his flock to give them his consolation and his help, and to administer the sacraments to them. Neither fatigue nor danger deterred him from his labour of mercy. Let us learn from him to see, to love and to help Our Lord in the person of the poor.

2ND POINT.—Consider how St. Charles in the midst of the labours he undertook for the reform of his important diocese and for the welfare of the Church, never relaxed his fervent spirit of prayer. It was in prayer he found the light and courage needed in such trying difficulties; in prayer he obtained God's blessings on his work; in prayer he found consolation in his severe trials. Happy the priest who like St. Charles has learned the value of prayer. It is the key to God's treasures.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Charles, though a man of delicate health and of great innocence of life, imposed on himself severe penance and mortification. His bed was a bare plank; often he limited his repast to bread and water; he chastised his body with a hairshirt and severe disciplines. In this way he sought God's mercy for himself and for those committed to his care. When we see so great a saint practising such penance, should not shame overwhelm us, sinners who pander to our senses and altogether neglect to practise that mortification and penance we stand so much in need of.

CCCLIV. FEAST OF ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA (13th Nov.)

Represent to yourself St. Stanislaus entering full of joy and glory on his eternal bliss.

Humbly pray Our Lord that you may learn from St. Stanislaus to apply yourself with your whole heart to the sanctification of your soul.

1ST POINT.—Consider the ardent desire of St. Stanislaus to live only for God. To be able better to do so he gladly renounced his great wealth, his illustrious family that counted kings among its members and all his worldly prospects. To consecrate himself to God, he left his beloved parents and undertook alone, on foot, trusting to what he might obtain by begging for his sustenance, the long journey from Vienna to Rome. We do not realise what it is to belong wholly to God, and therefore our efforts are so feeble towards the attainment of this great end.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a strong determination St. Stanislaus had to preserve his heart pure and unsullied, seeing that he preferred to submit to the ill-treatment of his brother

and his companions rather than expose himself to the danger of sin. We have no such trials to undergo in order to keep our heart pure and to avoid sin. Still, we cannot do so without making some sacrifices, without mortifying our senses and overcoming our evil propensities. It often costs severely to break loose from an affection that endangers our virtue. Ought not the courageous example of this holy child to move us to generosity?

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Stanislaus became a saint in a very short time. The secret of his rapid progress lay in his never losing an opportunity of growing in holiness. He made diligent and careful use of all the means God gave him. He listened with eagerness to instructions that he might learn how to serve better his Lord. What he thus learned he endeavoured to put into execution; the most ordinary actions of his life he performed with extreme perfection. The way to sanctity is the same for me; and the more closely I follow the example of St. Stanislaus the brighter shall be my crown hereafter in heaven.

CCCLV. FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

(3rd Dec.)

Represent to yourself St. Francis instructing the ignorant and children.

• Humbly pray that Our Lord may inflame your heart with a great zeal for souls after the example of this saintly apostle.

1ST POINT.—Consider how St. Francis spent himself for the salvation of souls. He left his country and all that were dear to him; he undertook long and most perilous journeys, first to India, then to Japan. In India his missionary expeditions were carried out on foot, regardless of dangers, privations or hardships. By day he was indefatigable in instructing the ignorant and children, and his nights were often passed in ardent supplication to God on behalf of those souls he loved so well. After ten years of apostolic labours his naturally strong constitution was entirely exhausted, and he succumbed to the fatigues of the journey he had undertaken with the view of preaching the Gospel in China at the risk of his life. Such was the ardour of his zeal to make God better known and loved; and in those

few years, what a work he accomplished for God, and what a number of souls he gained for heaven ! Reflect on what a glorious thing it is to spend one's life for God in this manner, and excite yourself to zeal this noble example.

2ND POINT.—Consider the motives that actuated St. Francis in his labours. His first and greatest motive was the love he bore his God and Saviour. When he saw so many men without the knowledge of their Creator and the Saviour who died for them, when he saw so many souls created in the image of God disfigured by sin ; his heart was pierced with sorrow and inflamed with an unquenchable zeal to see God's infinite goodness acknowledged and glorified by His creatures. Another motive was the thought of so many souls purchased by the precious Blood of Christ, steeped in ignorance and sin and rushing headlong into eternal perdition. To avert so awful a misfortune from those he regarded as his brethren, he deemed no sacrifice or labour too great. We should be actuated by the same motives in our ministry. Shall we then remain unmoved at the sight of so many sins against God, and of so many souls falling daily into hell ? We too should resolve willingly to spend ourselves for the sake of our God and our brethren.

3RD POINT.—Consider how St. Francis knowing well that the work of the salvation of souls is God's work, sought in God the grace necessary to make his labours effective. This conviction therefore urged him on to lead a more holy life, to become more united to God, and to implore His aid unceasingly. Let us draw from the example of this great apostle an appropriate lesson for ourselves.

MEDITATIONS FOR THE MONTHLY RECOLLECTION.

JANUARY

CCCLVI. ON THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION

Let them (priests) be holy because I also am holy : the Lord who sanctify them (Lev. xxi. 8).

Humbly pray Our Lord to give you a sincere desire of perfection and a firm purpose of applying yourself to it.

1ST POINT.—Consider the motives we priests have to apply ourselves to perfection.

First : It is the express will of God. He has entrusted us with His most sacred interests, and has appointed us His representatives with men. He allows us continual and intimate intercourse with His infinite Majesty, and therefore He rightly expects of us generous efforts to become more and more worthy of the dignity He has conferred on us. “This is the will of God,” says Holy Scripture, “your sanctification.”

Secondly : It is for us a duty of gratitude toward God who has treated and continues to treat us with such unbounded liberality. How unbecoming on our part to be stinted in our dealings with God, by not doing with love and alacrity all that we know is pleasing to Him.

Thirdly : It is our supreme interest that we should strive to attain perfection, for our real greatness shall be commensurate with the reflection we bear of the divine perfection in our purity of heart and in the virtues we practise. Besides, we shall have to give an account hereafter of the immense graces God has given us, and happy shall we be if we have made them fructify. What shall we answer, if on the contrary through our neglect they have proved sterile ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the obstacles that oppose our progress in perfection.

First : Pride blinding us to our own defects, attracting us towards our own glorification instead of the glory of God, whence follow innumerable sins.

Secondly : Sensuality alluring us to seek the gratification of our senses instead of God’s good pleasure, and to shirk our duties through dread of effort and toil.

Thirdly : Inordinate attachment to the goods of this life withholding us from striving after heavenly things.

Fourthly : Dissipation of mind by which we lose sight of the principles of faith that should govern all our actions,—hence, negligence and tepidity in our spiritual exercises and a great loss of the precious time which we owe to God and to our neighbour.

Let us examine ourselves and see which of these obstacles stands in the way of our progress towards perfection. Renew your former good resolutions.

CCCLVII. ON HUMILITY

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart
(*Matt. xi. 29*).

Humbly pray that Our Lord may inspire you with a firm purpose, to apply yourself earnestly to the acquisition of this virtue.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord's life from Bethlehem to Calvary is one continual lesson of humility. We naturally inquire why Our Lord insisted so much on this virtue, and taught it in so striking a manner by His own example. In His love for us He wished to forestall the terrible evil that pride can effect in our souls and, on the other hand, to point out to us the great blessings with which God favours the humble of heart. Pride has transformed thousands of angels into devils, has not unfrequently brought about the eternal ruin of God's priestly ministers, who under its influence rebelled against Him and His Church, and fell into schism or heresy. Humility is the armour of saints, and those endowed with it God promises to exalt. This is the lesson taught us by Our Lord whom we know to be infinite in wisdom. Have we not reason then to take this lesson to heart ?

2ND POINT.—Consider the motives which should urge us to practise humility. Of ourselves we are nothing ; whatever be our qualities, our talents, our virtues, they are gifts of God who could withdraw them as easily as He has bestowed them. Again, how many are the offences, often perhaps grievous, by which we have offended the infinite goodness and majesty of God. Were it not for His great mercy, our lot might have been amid eternal torments and shame. Even still, do we not experience daily our extreme weakness ? Without God's special help we could not overcome our passions, nor refrain from falling into the most grievous sins. What then are our grounds of self-esteem ? Rather have we many reasons for despising ourselves, and for accepting readily the humiliations we meet with as our just desert.

3RD POINT.—Let us examine ourselves as to how we have hitherto practised this most necessary virtue. Have we banished from our hearts all self-conceit, everything that tends to raise

our self-esteem, to make us regard ourselves superior to others, to induce feelings of contempt towards them? Do we judge others harshly and without mercy, criticise their failings and shortcomings, never reflecting on our own? Do we find ourselves obstinate in our opinions, unwilling to receive correction or advice? Do we not often hanker for the praise and esteem of men, become peevish or downhearted when we fail to obtain it, or envious of the praise and preference given to others? Do we suppress that spirit of independence which resents subjection to authority, and makes us act against the wishes of our superiors? We evince at times our pride by our habit of boasting of our success, or of bringing our achievements directly or indirectly under the notice of others. When we consider ourselves to have been wronged, slighted, neglected or made little of, we indulge in feelings of anger or discouragement. The crosses and humiliations God sends us we frequently refuse to accept in a spirit of patience and submission. How far do we not find ourselves from that sentiment of David: it is good, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me? Let us make good resolutions, keeping in mind that we cannot learn to be humble without undergoing humiliations. Let us pray fervently for the grace to practise this virtue.

MARCH

CCCLVIII. ON SACERDOTAL CHASTITY

I chastise my body and bring it into subjection : lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away (I Cor. ix. 27).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may strengthen your purpose to use diligently the means of preserving your chastity.

1ST POINT.—Consider the motives we have for keeping a jealous guard over our chastity. It is a virtue that lifts us above the things of earth, and, although by nature inferior to the angels, we become like to them by its practice. Our lives are more perfectly consecrated to God in that we are free to spend ourselves entirely in His service. This virtue raises our minds and hearts towards heavenly things, renders us particularly dear to Our Lord, and in accordance with His promise merits

for us a special glory in heaven. It is therefore a treasure to be guarded with care, for it is very delicate and we are very weak. The devil who envies bitterly whatever makes us dearer to God, will do all in his power to destroy this virtue in our hearts. He will let no occasion of tempting us escape him ; he will use insidious pretexts in order to ensnare us ; he will try to weaken us by inducing us to become negligent in prayer, and will suggest the needlessness of vigilant care, so that he may take us by surprise.

On the other hand, what a terrible thing it is for a priest who, unmindful of what he owes to his God and to his dignity, allows himself to seek for gratification in sensual pleasures. How deep is his fall, how great the outrage against God whose temple he desecrates, how injurious to himself, and alas, often to the souls he was sent to save and to guide to heaven. Such reflections ought to inspire us with a resolution to use with the utmost diligence whatever means God places at our disposal, in order to preserve untarnished this treasure of chastity. These means are fervent prayer, watchfulness over our affections, generous mortification of our sensuality.

2ND POINT.—Let us examine ourselves on the precautions we take for the preservation of this most delicate virtue. Do I foster in my heart a horror of whatever is even remotely contrary to chastity ? Am I careful in avoiding too great an intimacy in my conversations, even with such as are pious ? Do I suppress at once any irregular affection for others ? And am I strictly careful never to manifest any such affection, especially by an excess of familiarity ? When such converse is necessary, do I keep severe guard on my senses ? Am I prudent and reserved in the confessional ? Do I keep a cautious guard over my senses, not looking at or reading or listening to what might excite passion ? Do I flee generously all occasions of sin, avoiding idleness and intemperance ? Do I have constant recourse to prayer, invoking the names of Jesus and Mary especially in time of temptation ? Do I practise self-denial ?

“ O divine chastity,” exclaims St. Athanasius, “ happy is he that possesses thee, constantly keeps thee. He shall labour a little and find a great source of joy in thee.”

APRIL

CCCLIX. ON OBEDIENCE

Represent to yourself Jesus at Nazareth, working under the direction of St. Joseph.

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may teach you to esteem and love obedience and to practise it perfectly.

1ST POINT.—Consider how Our Lord, the supreme Ruler of the world, chose for Himself a life of lowly obedience. He did so in order to teach us to banish from our heart the spirit of independence and all ambition for high dignities that cause ruin to so many. He knew that for us there is no safer path to heaven, since in obeying our superiors we fulfil the will of God who has appointed them to govern us. He knew also that the practice of this virtue is a means of acquiring immense merits for heaven, as in obedience we sacrifice to God the best of all that we possess, our own will, and thus give the most sincere proof of our love. How can we call ourselves true disciples of Jesus, if we fail to put into practice this lesson He took so much trouble to teach us?

2ND POINT.—Consider the motive that actuated Jesus in rendering to St. Joseph that respectful, complete and loving obedience. He saw in St. Joseph His heavenly Father, and in St. Joseph's commands the expression of His Father's will. In like manner, we should learn to see in our superiors, not men liable to err, inferior to us, perhaps, in talent or in virtue, but God Himself whose representatives they are for us. If we do so, we shall always show them that respect and submission inherent to true obedience; their orders are the expression of God's will in our regard. How then can we refuse to submit to God who claims our obedience on so many titles?

3RD POINT.—Let us examine ourselves on our obedience to our superiors. Is our motive supernatural, that is, do we obey for the sake of God, not through fear, human esteem or affection, or through a desire of pleasing men? Is our obedience entire, prompt, cheerful, as it would certainly be, did we receive those commands directly from Our Lord Himself? Are we satisfied to remain in subjection to others as long as such is God's good pleasure? Do we murmur against our superiors or criticise their actions? We should try to convince ourselves

that the safer and more profitable position is to be in subjection rather than to be in authority, and hence we should banish from our hearts all ambitious desires of independence. Recalling the advantages of perfect obedience and all the evil which insubordination has wrought in the world, let us resolve to adhere in a spirit of generosity to the example of Jesus Christ.

MAY

CCOLX. ON CHARITY

A new commandment I give unto you : That you love one another as I have loved you (John xiii. 34).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may fill your heart with a fervent charity for your neighbour.

1ST POINT.—Consider how great is the desire of Our Lord that those belonging to Him should practise charity towards their neighbour. He has made it a special commandment ; He calls it a new commandment that you should love one another. He has told us that whatever we do to the least of His, He will consider as done to Himself. Moreover He represents the decision of our final judgment on the last day as dependent on our practice of this virtue. Seeing then the importance Our Lord attaches to charity, we should apply ourselves to its perfect practice—we, especially, who are appointed by Him to lead others to heaven by our example as well as by our teaching.

2ND POINT.—Consider what a high standard of charity Jesus proposes to us. He bids us love our neighbour as He has loved us. Therefore, our love for our neighbour must be supernatural. Notwithstanding all our miseries Jesus has loved us because He saw in our soul the image of His heavenly Father. Our love must extend to all, especially to the poor, the ignorant and to sinners. It must be a love prompted by self-sacrifice. Our Lord spared Himself no trouble, shrank from no humiliation, not even from the cruel sufferings of His passion and death in order to save us. Finally, our love must be full of patience, mercy and kindness ; such indeed was His forbearance, in spite of our sins, our ingratitude and our coldness. Thus Jesus presents Himself to me as the model of charity and bids me to imitate Him.

3RD POINT.—Let us examine ourselves as to how we meet this command of Our Lord in our practice of charity. "Charity," says St. Paul, "is patient : " patient with the ignorance, defects and ingratitude of others ;—" it is kind," in thought, word and action, and destroys all harshness ;—" it envieth not " the success of others, nor the praise they obtain, nor does it seek to lessen that praise ;—" it is not puffed up," not overbearing, nor scornful towards anyone either in thought or action ;—" it seeketh not its own," always ready to undergo sacrifice for the good of the neighbour ;—" it is not provoked to anger," but willingly forgives all injuries ;—" it thinketh no evil," never interprets unfavourably the actions of others, yielding too easily to suspicions or rash judgments. Such is charity as we have it from the inspired word of God : is this our charity ?

JUNE

CCCLXI. ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF OUR DAILY ACTIONS

Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God (I Cor. x. 31).

Humbly ask Our Lord to teach you to sanctify all your actions.

1ST POINT.—Consider the spiritual gain that accrues to us by sanctifying all our actions. The deliberate actions of our whole life are innumerable, and even the least of them offers us an occasion of practising some virtue ; hence they present us with a means of glorifying God and of acquiring great merit for ourselves. What a wealth of heavenly treasures he shall have accumulated who has thus sanctified all his actions, and what a loss for him who has neglected to do so.

2ND POINT.—Consider the example of the Blessed Virgin in this matter. From a human standpoint her condition of life was a lowly one ; she was engaged in very humble occupations, common to those of the poor. In the eyes of men her work was insignificant. Nevertheless, on account of the perfection with which she performed each of her actions, God was incomparably more glorified by them than by any others, however glorious in the sight of the world. We should therefore

keep in mind that it is not by extraordinary achievements that we shall give most glory to God and gain merit for ourselves, but by the perfect fulfilment of those duties to which we are in conscience bound.

3RD POINT.—What must we do in order to perform perfectly our daily actions? In all of them there is an exterior as well as an interior perfection. In such actions as form part of our duty, their exterior perfection will consist : in performing them in due time, not postponing them till it becomes impossible to fulfil them without hurry ; in performing them diligently and carefully, not in a negligent or slothful manner ; in performing them cheerfully, being careful to avoid murmur or complaint. Such actions as our meals, recreations, readings, conversation, we should regulate by due temperance, refraining from what is useless, an impediment to duty, or a loss of time.

The interior perfection of our actions requires that we direct them towards the glory of God, perform them in God's presence, out of love for Him, and in union with Him. Seeing that it is so necessary to sanctify all our actions in view of our eternal interests, let us examine each of our daily occupations. and see what we should do in order to render them more pleasing to God.

JULY

CCCLXII. ON THE USE OF TIME

Behold, now is the acceptable time : behold, now is the day of salvation (II Cor. vi. 2).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may help you to realise the great value of time, and inspire you with a firm purpose to make the best possible use of it.

1st POINT.—Consider the great value of time. It is given to us in order to prepare for our eternity, than which nothing in this life can be deemed more important. When a man is engaged in some important transaction on which depends the acquisition or the loss of great wealth, he will not permit his attention to be diverted, and should anyone attempt to do so, he

will reply : “ I have no time for anything else : my time is too precious.” Reflect on the importance of your occupations—the sanctification of your soul, the atonement for your past sins, the acquisition of merit for heaven. Moreover, the eternal salvation of many souls may depend on the use you make of your time ; you have to fulfil your duties as a priest, to pray, to study, to instruct those souls entrusted to your charge, and thus to glorify God. There is but a short time allotted to you ; that time is of an uncertain duration ; whatever you lose of it can never be recovered. Shall the words also be applied to you, that the children of the world are wiser than the children of light ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how we may lose our precious time. By living in mortal sin since in that state we can merit nothing for heaven. By being idle or occupying ourselves with trifles, such as frivolous and useless reading, protracted and profitless recreations. A lack of order in our daily work is also a source of a great loss of time. Negligence in our work, seeking our own interests, instead of God’s glory, are under another aspect causes of a loss of time, for we thus lose at least a part of the merit we might have acquired. Let us remember the warning of the Apostle : “ Behold, now is the acceptable time,” the time during which you can do great things for God and for yourself ; “ now is the day of salvation.” Resolve to make use of every moment of time God grants you according to His divine will.

AUGUST

CCCLXIII. ON THE DAILY CROSS

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matt. xvi. 24).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may teach you to esteem and love the cross.

1ST POINT.—Consider how we are bound to take up our daily cross. We cannot avoid it ; first, because we are men, and suffering is the penalty of sin ; secondly, because we are living with other men who like ourselves have their defects from which we necessarily suffer ; thirdly, because we are christians, that is, disciples of Him who said :—If any man will

come after me, let him take up his cross ; fourthly, because we are priests, that is, associates with Our Lord in the great work of the salvation of souls, which cannot be accomplished otherwise than by means of the cross. Since then the cross is unavoidable and can be sanctified through the merits of Jesus Christ, we would act unwisely in trying to escape it or in accepting it with reluctance. Thus we only render it the heavier and lose the abundant fruit that otherwise always accompanies it.

2ND POINT.—Consider the nature of the cross that we have to take up and to sanctify. It is the cross of our daily work with its humiliations, failures and disappointments : of our bodily sufferings, illness and incapacity for work : of our mental troubles and anxieties resulting from temptations, spiritual desolation and aridity : of our sorrows when we lose those dear to us. This is our cross chosen for us by God for our spiritual welfare. In accepting it from God's hand in a spirit of resignation to His holy will, in bearing it with courage and patience and even with cheerfulness, we shall be adhering to the conditions Jesus lays down for those who follow Him.

3RD POINT.—Consider the great advantages we can desire from the cross which we sanctify by our willing acceptance. It purifies our soul from the remnants of sin which we should otherwise have to expiate in purgatory. It detaches our heart from this world and lifts it heavenwards. It becomes a source of immense merits for heaven ; for by our sufferings patiently endured we acknowledge God's infinite mercy, wisdom and goodness, and thus give Him great glory. It reproduces in us the image of our Crucified Lord, and in this way we become special objects of God's love. Happy those who understand the value of the cross and live according to their knowledge. At the hour of death, the cross they have thus sanctified will be to them a source of peace, consolation and joy.

SEPTEMBER

CCCLXIV. ON THE RECITATION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

It is good to give praise to the Lord : and to sing to thy name, O most High. To show forth thy mercy in the morning, and thy truth in the night (Ps. xcii, 1. 2).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may make you realise better the greatness of the action you perform in reciting the divine office.

1ST POINT.—Consider the excellence of the divine office. In greater part it consists of prayers inspired by God that we may render Him due praise. What prayer can be more pleasing to God and more worthy to ascend before the throne of His Infinite Majesty? Reflect on the frequent and beautiful acts of virtue it contains: acts of faith, confidence in God's mercy, love of His infinite goodness, trust in His providence, conformity to His holy will, thanksgiving for His benefits, contrition for our sins, desire for a greater union with God. Again, the divine office is the prayer of the Church; when I recite it, it is in her name and as her delegate that I unite with the angels and saints to praise and thank Him who is Goodness itself and the source of all good. Do I remember the greatness of my action when I recite the divine office?

2ND POINT.—Consider what you are doing when you recite your office in a careless or negligent manner. You owe God supreme reverence. When you address Him in a hurried manner, inattentive to what you are saying, undignified in your attitude, do you not address Him with less respect than you would address an earthly sovereign? In reciting the divine office you praise God in the name of the Church as her delegate. Do you not then wrong the Church who has a right to demand that you should represent her worthily? The Church offers this prayer for the living and the dead. Do you not wrong them when you offer a prayer unworthy to be heard by God on account of negligence and irreverence? These reflections should stimulate us to greater diligence in the fulfilment of this duty. Such diligence, however, should not take the form of scrupulosity.

3RD POINT.—Consider what are the causes of our defects in the recitation of the divine office. It may be want of previous recollection by which we become unmindful of the infinite Majesty of God whom we address. It may be due to our not having a fixed time for our office and in consequence being obliged to hurry through it. Wilful distractions and unnecessary interruptions likewise mar the merit of this prayer. Do we reflect on and are we convinced of the excellence of the action we thus perform? Let us examine ourselves on this most important subject, and see what are the causes of any defects we may notice in our recitation of the divine office. Form good resolutions.

OCTOBER

CCCLXV. ON OUR DAILY MEDITATION

With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart (Jer. xii. 11).

Humbly pray that Our Lord may excite in your heart a high esteem for this holy exercise, and a firm purpose to apply yourself to it with diligence.

1ST POINT.—Consider the necessity of meditation. For us priests, much more than for others, the truths of faith ought to be the motive and rule of all our actions. If we allow them to grow dim and worldly cares and interests to occupy our minds, we expose ourselves to recede from that holiness of life, the necessary adjunct of our high vocation, and perhaps run the risk of falling away altogether from God's friendship. It is therefore necessary for us to keep in mind the teaching and example of our Divine Master, so that having our hearts penetrated with His spirit we may be always armed against the assaults of Satan. What is the cause of the ruin of so many? The Holy Ghost gives us the answer: with desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart. Ought not this to be a warning for us never to neglect so powerful a means of preserving our soul in the faithful service of God?

2ND POINT.—Consider the great advantages of meditation. It is an intimate intercourse with God, the source of all light, strength and holiness. If continual converse with wise or holy men is a great means of becoming wise and holy, how great are the advantages we may derive from holding converse with God? It is there that many holy men and women have learned the science of the saints; there, that their minds have been enlightened, their wills strengthened to face difficulties, their hearts inflamed with the love of God. In such divine converse many saintly priests have found the wisdom necessary to guide others to heaven, the consolation they needed in their trials, the constancy in the practice of virtue and zeal for souls, which their vocation requires. So fruitful an exercise then claims my whole-hearted application.

3RD POINT.—Examine how you perform your meditation. Do you neglect or shorten it without any serious reason? Is your preparation for it made with sufficient diligence? When

entering on your meditation, do you recall the infinite Majesty of God, eliciting acts of deep reverence and humility and of great confidence in His readiness to help you? Do you approach your prayer with an ardent desire of obtaining God's light and help, with great liberality, ready for whatever sacrifice God may demand of you? Do you indulge in wilful distractions? Do you adhere to some method? Do you yield to discouragement on account of the apparent fruitlessness of your efforts, or on account of the desolation and aridity you experience?

NOVEMBER

CCCLXVI. ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Be clean. Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well (Isai. i. 16, 17).

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may inspire you with a firm resolve to apply yourself earnestly to self-amendment.

1ST POINT.—Consider the necessity and the utility of the daily examination of conscience. If we seriously desire to purify our hearts, to correct what is defective in our daily actions, we must become conscious of our failings. It is therefore necessary to examine carefully at least once a day the state of our souls and each of our actions; for as soon as we cease to be vigilant, defects creep into our best actions and spoil them at least in some measure; inordinate affections develop strength within us and become a real danger. Let us give ear to the solemn warning of Our Lord to His Apostles, to be watchful lest we fall into temptation.

2ND POINT.—Consider how the knowledge of our faults would be of little avail if it were not accompanied with a sincere sorrow for having offended God by them and with an earnest purpose of amendment: nay, this very knowledge without repentance would become more harmful than profitable. We should gradually acquire a tendency towards callousness of conscience with the prospect of ending in downright tepidity. Our guilt besides would be the greater because we could not appeal to the excuse of ignorance.

3RD POINT.—Consider the many reasons we have for conceiving a deep sorrow for our sins. Apart from the fear of God's severe judgment which will be stricter for us, priests, than for others, because of the special light and graces we have received, we have a peculiar obligation of love and gratitude. When we reflect on the infinite goodness and holiness of God, so much more clearly manifested to us than to many other men; when we think of the invaluable benefits that God has so lavishly bestowed upon us; we cannot refrain from a sentiment of the deepest sorrow for not having loved, as we ought, One so worthy of all our love. These reflections should convince us of the necessity of being faithful to our daily examination of conscience and of fulfilling this duty with the utmost care. Herein we learn to know ourselves, elicit acts of sorrow for our sins, and resolve upon our amendment. If we make use of it after this manner, what a powerful means of sanctification it will become for us.

DECEMBER

CCCLXVII. ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

Recall the warning of God to the priests of the Old Law : *They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane his name. For they offer the burnt offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God (Lev. xxi. 6).*

Humbly pray Our Lord that He may make you realise better the wonderful greatness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and may inspire you with a firm purpose of celebrating the holy mysteries with all possible devotion.

1ST POINT.—Consider the greatness of the action you perform when you celebrate Mass. "Awful is this mystery," says the Imitation, "and great the dignity of the priest to whom is granted what is denied to the angels." Each time Mass is offered, the Sacrifice of Calvary is renewed in an unbloody manner. The priest who ministers, endowed with divine power, in the person of Christ, gives utterance to the words of consecration and the Divine Victim is at once present on the altar. What stupendous miracles are wrought at that instant ! Infinite

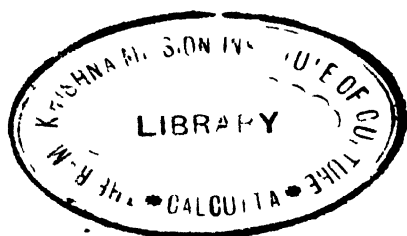
glory is thereby rendered to God ; a thanksgiving of infinite value is offered to Him ; His avenging arm is withheld from striking a sinful world ; sinners obtain pardon, the dead receive help and comfort, and abundant blessings are showered upon the living. Shall we treat an action so sublime, the greatest of our religion, as if it were some ordinary action of our day performed out of routine ? Does not this sacred function deserve the greatest possible fervour, attention, devotion and reverence ?

2ND POINT.—Consider how we ought to prepare ourselves in order to celebrate worthily. However holy and sinless anyone might be, he could not deem himself worthy to perform so sublime an action. The Holy Mass should be the centre of our life : all our thoughts, words and actions should tend to make us less unworthy of offering this great Sacrifice. How we should approach the altar with deep recollection, with profound humility with great confidence and an ardent love ! Without a diligent preparation we cannot hope to elicit in our hearts such acts of virtue.

3RD POINT.—Consider how precious are the moments of your thanksgiving after Mass. Our Lord has come to visit you —He, who is infinite in Majesty, before whom the angels bow down in adoration. Will you receive Him without paying Him due honour ? With so much love He has come to you, to give Himself to you, to unite Himself to you : can you ever return Him adequate thanks for such a favour ? will you forget to thank Him, to offer Him in return all you have, especially your love ? He has come to you with His hands full of heavenly treasures ; and you, so poor and indigent, will you lose such an opportunity of obtaining for yourself and for your work the blessings you are so much in need of ?



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